

THE FIVE CENT

WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1879, by FRANK TOUSEY, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

No. 417.

{ SINGLE
NUMBER. }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER,
18 ROSE STREET, N. Y.

{ PRICE
5 CENTS. }

Vol. I.

EBENEZER CROW.



His carpet bag flew in one direction and the contents in another, while his umbrella and hat helped to stir things up.

CHAPTER I.

BRINGS EBENEZER TO THE FRONT.

DID you ever see John Hart, the negro character actor, in his parts?

Well, Ebenezer Crow was naturally just such a looking coon as he is when made up for one of his comic characters.

He was a big, greasy young fellow, about twenty years of age, so black that charcoal made a blonde mark on him, and just about as stupid as he was comical.

He had formerly lived in Richmond, where he

was born and kicked up, and somehow or other he found himself in New York, just as aimless and shiftless as ever, living wherever he could get a chance, and chancing everything that held out the slightest hope of getting along without work.

After hanging around New York for about a year, he was able to pack all his earthly possessions into an old valise, and even then it looked as thin as a starved cat.

Finally, one day his luck took a sudden turn in the most unexpected manner.

Mrs. Plunket heard of him, and being in want

of a man-servant, she hired him through another colored man in the employ of one of her friends, and he was told to gather up his personal property and present himself at her house, situated on Madison avenue, in a very tony locality.

And now we will just take a look at Eben's future home.

Mrs. Plunket was a wealthy widow, with a family consisting of one boy and one girl. She was out of her widow's weeds, and was now what is known as a lady of fashion, fat, fair and forty. She also had a brother living with her, an eccentric professor of something or other, some-

thing that surely didn't amount to anything, for he depended upon her entirely for a living. He was forever on the point of doing something of a wonderful nature that had millions in it, but he always managed to slip up on it for some very good reason or other, and taken all in all, this "Professor" Dinglebus was a character.

Next one for introduction is Master Dick Plunket. He was a smart, fine-looking lad, about sixteen years of age, and just as full of all kinds of devilment as an egg is of chicken material. But he was generally so sly about it that he was seldom caught.

Next comes his sister, Rose. She was about two years older than Dick, very airy, and very ambitious regarding the number of beaux she could keep on the string; and as she was regarded as an heiress, and was very good-looking, she had no trouble at all in keeping any number of them on a dance, although Dick was forever getting her into some scrape or another with them, his last trick being to write them all letters, requesting each one to spend an evening with her as an especial favor. The result was a regular picnic.

The other members of the household consisted of Miss Assafidity Brown, the colored cook, and Joanna Gilhooly, the chambermaid.

Professor Dinglebus had a study on the parlor floor—on the back side of the house—where his gigantic brain worked out its wonders, and into which no one was allowed to enter without a special invitation. Dick was also a thorn in his side, as he was in everybody's, and the amount of mischief which he occasioned would have driven a sensible man mad.

Well, Ebenezer Crow packed his valise, seized his old umbrella, and made tracks for the Plunket mansion, happy as a coon in a gum tree over the chunk of good luck that had tumbled upon him. In fact, he felt perfectly at home even before he reached the house, and so elated was he that, as he swelled along the streets, he attracted much attention, and had a crowd of boys shouting after him.

But he felt too good to pay any attention to them, and continued his way, singing and capering along.

Arriving at the house, he went to the basement door, intending to ring the bell, and he admitted there; but finding it standing open, he walked in without ringing, and at once began to explore around.

As it happened, he found no one in the basement just then, and so he walked up stairs to the parlor floor.

Here he found no one, everybody being up stairs, and at length he espied the old professor's room, the door of which was partially open on account of the heat.

Eben began to investigate without speaking a word, and as the professor's back happened to be towards the door, and he was engaged in some great scientific problem, he did not observe the black mug that was being thrust slowly into his privacy.

And Eben's curiosity and wonder being greatly excited, he appeared to forget himself and where he was. Certainly he did not know that Dick Plunket stood behind him with a base ball bat in his hand.

"Oh, I guess not!" he whispered, as he spat upon his hands and grasped the bat.

Swinging it around once or twice, he gave Ebenezer such a whack on the basement of his pants that it nearly frightened him out of his wits, and sent him headlong into the room.

His carpet bag flew in one direction and the contents in a dozen, while that old umbrella and hat helped to stir things up.

The professor yelled murder, and seized an old horse pistol, supposing robbers were after him.

Ebenezer yelled like a stuck pig as he scrambled and wobbled around the room, while Dick rushed in to follow up his advantage, fully believing that he was a thieving tramp.

"Whoa—whoa—whoa dar!" yelled Eben, picking himself up.

"Shoot his black roof off, unc!" said Dick, raising his ball bat again.

"Get out, you black thief!" cried the frightened professor.

"Whoa, dar, honey—whoa! I is used ter bein' kicked by mules, but I neber sperenced anyting in de liftin' line like dat."

"Who are you, sir, and what are you doing here?" sternly demanded the professor.

"I'll go for a cop, unc. Don't let him sherry out while I'm gone. Cover him with yer pop."

"No—no, Dick; don't go; don't leave your old uncle with this black ruffian."

"Oh, let me hit him one or two more home

licks, and he won't bother you," said Dick, again spitting on his hands.

"Whoa, dar, young feller! Don't let dat mule kick me any mo'," said Eben, dancing around in a most comical way, and trying to get behind the old professor.

"Keep away! Don't you come near me!"

"Keep away dat mule stick, den."

"Begone, base ruffian, or I shall be obliged to litter and muss up my study with your gore!"

"Let's take him out in the back yard, and kill him. Here, Nip, sic him," added Dick, as his black and tan dog came upon the scene.

That was just the sort of a dog Nip was, and he made a leap for Ebenezer, who leaped upon the professor's library table to escape being bitten.

"Call off that dog! Call him off!"

"Look out, you miserable vagabond. You are smashing my wonderful experiment!" yelled the professor, and in fact, Eben's No. 16 boots were raising the mischief with everything.

"Sic him, Nip!"

And Nip was barking and trying his best to get a taste of him.

"Hole on! I am n't no nuffin' bad."

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I war sent fo'."

"Who the devil sent for you?"

"Missus Plunket."

"Nonsense! you are a fraud! Get down, and out of this on the double quick, and let me help you with this bat," said Dick.

Just then Mrs. Plunket came down stairs, and took in the sensational situation. Ebenezer still refused to get down from the table.

"What is all this?" she demanded.

"A coon!" said Dick.

"A tramp! a thief!" added the professor.

"Shoot him!"

"Stop it. I—I—"

"Who are you?" asked Mrs. Plunket.

"Ebenezer Crow."

"Good name," said Dick, laughing.

Nip was all the while barking and jumping up, and trying to get at Eben.

"Call off that dog, Richard," said his mother.

"Let up, Nip."

"Now sir, get down and explain yourself."

Ebenezer got cautiously down, and Dick had to hold his dog to keep him from sampling him.

"Are you Mrs. Plunket?"

"Yes, I am; and who are you?"

"Didn't you tell Mr. White's colored man dat you wanted me?"

"Yes. Are you the person that he spoke to me about?"

"I am dat ebony indervidual, mum."

"But how does it happen that you make your appearance in such a manner?"

"De fac'am, dat I war jus' a lookin' round when dat yer boy, he—"

"Yes, mammy, I thought he was a thief, and so I raised him with my bat."

"Bat! I felt shua dat a mule had heave he hoof at me. But heah I am."

"And a sweet-looking plum you are," said Dick, laughing.

"I protest," said the professor, whose study was knocked into a wreck.

"Hire him, mammy, hire him!"

"Why are you so interested?" she asked.

"I sha'n't have to go to the minstrels if he is here."

"You go about your business, Richard, and mind that you don't interfere with this man."

"Oh, I won't interfere! Oh, no, mammy! I'll start a little Sunday school, and take him for my class, of course," said Dick, going away.

"Am dat your boy?" asked Eben.

"Yes. Why?"

"He am a bery nice boy, mum."

"Well, let that pass. You are in want of a situation, I understand?"

"Yes'm."

"Have you a character?"

"A putty good one, mum."

"Let me see it, please."

Ebenezer rolled his eyes around for a moment, and then struck an attitude before her.

"Well?"

"Look at me."

"But your character?"

"Behold it!"

"Nonsense! I mean a recommendation from your last place."

"Dat war down on South Fifth avenue."

"Who did you work for?"

"Fo' Ebenezer Crow."

"Why, that is yourself."

"Yes'm. Dat am de indervidual dat I hab been a workin' fo' eber since I struck New York; but he am mighty poor pay."

"Yes, and I guess it would bother him to give you a character," growled the professor.

"But have you no character?"

"Well, mum, only what you see."

"But where have you lived?"

"In several places, dat's a fac'."

"But have you worked for any person of note or social distinction?"

"I war de body servant of Jeff Davis once."

"What?"

"Fo' a fac'."

"The servant of Jefferson Davis?"

"Fo' a fac'."

"You are engaged. Here, Richard!" she called after her son. "Come here!"

Dick soon retired.

"Take—what is your name?"

"Ebenezer Crow."

"One of the three black crows," said Dick.

"Take Ebenezer over to Mr. Blink's, and have a suit of livery made for him."

"All right, mammy. Come on, Eb."

"Behave yourself, Richard."

"All right. Come on."

"Whar shall I bestow my pusnul baggage?" said Eben, picking up his umbrella and the scattered contents of his carpet bag.

"Take him up stairs to the back square room and show him where he is to be at home."

"All right. Heave up, Ebenezer."

"Chile, I don't feel much like it jus' now."

"Like what?"

"Heavin' up."

"Oh, come along!" and Ebenezer followed the boy who was to be his future torment.

"Sister, what are you thinking about?" asked the professor.

"Well, what is the matter with you?" asked Mrs. Plunket, turning sharply upon him.

"That awful African!"

"Mind your own business, Theophilus! Hasn't he been a servant of Jefferson Davis?"

"You have no proof of it."

"Any more than I have that you have common sense. You attend to your own affairs!"

"But he has spoiled one of my beautiful scientific experiments, the great monkey!"

"Brother, you are a fool!"

"Yes, for not strewing his remains over the floor—I acknowledge it. See what he has done," said he, pointing to the wreck on his table.

"Bah! what does your experiment amount to?" said she, turning away as she turned up her nose.

"What does it amount to! Good gracious, Alice! What does it amount to? Why, I was just on the eve of one of the greatest discoveries of the age; something that would have convulsed the world, had not that huge-footed African trampled it to pieces."

"Oh, you are always on the eve of something that is dreadfully great, but, somehow, you never get over the threshold! But be assured that I think more of my new servant than I do of you or your wonderful inventions."

"I dare say. I am always henpecked in some way," said he, sadly; and mournfully turned to his shattered experiment, and she left him alone.

"Another great invention lost to the world," groaned the professor. "But I may yet be able to make amends by the experiments which I shall make upon this same negro. I have long believed that the negro could be made as white as the Anglo Saxon, and now that this fellow is to be a member of the household, I shall set on foot a series of experiments that will startle the world."

This settled, the old professor began to gather the wreck of his experiment together, and to plan for future ones upon the unsuspecting Ebenezer Crow.

Meantime, Dick had taken Eben to the tailor, and had him measured for a nice suit of livery; and a prouder coon than he was could not be found.

Then he took him back home for the purpose of introducing him to the other servants, but the dog, Nip, still insisted upon sampling him.

"Take 'way dat dorg, Dick, or bimeby I shall get harmful," said he.

"You will find a harmful if you attempt to get in on that purp, and don't you forget it, Eb," said Dick.

"Bettah introduce me, so dat we may become good fr'en's, fo' I don't want to harm him."

"Harm him! Do you know—he has killed ten men already!"

"Good Lord!"

"Fact; he's got the hydrophobia!"

"Am dat so?"

"Fact, I assure you. I keep him with a stock of hydrophobia on hand just to get square with my enemies."

"Good Lord!"

"So lay low, and when he wants to get a piece of you, don't kick or it will kill you."

"Guess I better go. Whar's my baggage?"

"Oh, never mind. Nip's all right if you don't get your back up when he bites you."

"Good Lord!"

Taking him down to the kitchen, Dick introduced him to the cook and chambermaid.

"Miss Assafidity, I am you's," said he, bowing very low with a big flourish.

She rolled her eyes at him, but made no reply.

"Dick, I wants yer fo' ter keep out ob dis kitchen wid yer nonsense," said she, turning to him.

"What's the matter with you? This is our new man, and don't you put on ruffles, or he'll go for Joanna."

"For me!" exclaimed the Irish girl. "Bad luck ter him! Do yer think I'd bother meself wid the loikes of a nager? Be away wid ye, or I'll break every bone in yer skin."

"Oh, that's too thin! I know you like 'smoked meat,' I've heard you say so."

"Go 'way wid yer nonsense. Sure, yer the wust blackguard of a bye in New York."

"You wrong me, sweetness. But come, Fidy, get Mr. Crow something to eat."

"Would you like something to eat?" she asked.

"To tell de truf, Miss Fidy, de yearning ob my internal machinery convinces me dat a few corn beef an' cabbage would dull de exuberance ob my digestive conglomeration," said he, bowing low.

"Oh, what airs! You mean dat you are hungry," said the cook, with arms akinbo.

"Dat am de condition ob my digestives, sweet honeysuckle ob de household."

"Stop dat! Dis yer am no place fo' ter peddle taffy. If yer gwine fo' ter become a member ob dis yer household, yer got ter talk sense. Squar yerself at dat table," said she, pointing to a table in the corner of the room.

"Miss Fidy, I am squar'd," said he, taking a place at the table.

In a few moments she had a respectable meal of victuals before him, a better one than he had ever squared himself to before in his life.

And he went for it, after which Mrs. Plunket had a private conference with him, and he gave her all the taffy she wanted relative to what he had seen and done while in the employ of Jefferson Davis.

The next day Mrs. Plunket took him in hand to show him the duties of a man servant.

In the meantime she had tried hard to crush her friends, by informing them that she had in her employ a man who had once been in the employ of the great and glorious Jefferson Davis.

Dick was the next one to take him in hand.

He took him up to the top of the house, that is to say, up to the attic floor where the stair rail ended, and there gave him his first lesson in his duties.

"Now, Ebenezer, we want this stair rail polished, and you may as well do it while you are waiting for your new togs."

"Togs! What am togs, Dick?"

"Why, your new harness, of course."

"Oh, fo' shuanuf," said he, opening his mug for a big square grin. "Won' I be drefful scrumptuous?"

"Equal to a major general. But now to business. Do you know how to polish this hand-rail? well, of course you don't, so I'll show you. You see there's got to be a big weight put on to polish it."

"Whar am de weight? I'll fix it; oh—oh! I guess not mo' 'n fo'teen or fifty times!" he added, throwing his hands above his head and laying himself out on a few steps of "Ole Virginia Essence," so good did it make him feel when he thought how nice he was sure to look when he got into his suit of livery. "When will it be done, Dickey?"

"Day after to-morrow. But, come, brace up now for the polishing of this rail."

"All right. Whar am de weight?"

"You are the weight. Now, here is some French polish. Take and rub it all up and down the front of your old clothes; you don't care for them, you know," said Dick, giving him a cup of grease which he had procured in the kitchen.

"Put the polish on my belly?" asked Ebenezer, opening his eyes as big as eggs.

"Yes—yes, and then I'll show you how to polish the rail so that it will tickle mammy almost to death."

"All right, fo' dat am jus' what I wants ter do," and he proceeded to daub his old clothes all up and down the front with the grease.

"Now that's all right, and you can keep the old duds on purpose to polish the rail with, for it has to be done on the first of every month. Now

you want to get right straddle of it this way and let yourself slide from the top to the bottom, for it is your weight with the polish that does the business. Slide down five or six times and it will be polished so that you can see your face in it. Go ahead."

Ebenezer did as directed, and he went to the bottom of that first flight of stairs like a streak of greased lightning, landing up against the door of the professor's bedroom, knocking it open and tumbling things over with a tremendous crash. The old man had nothing on but his shirt, and the smash nearly frightened him out of that. He yelled fire, police, murder, and robbers, as loud as he could bawl, while the bruised and bewildered darkey picked himself up with such an expression on his face as he might have had if he had been shot out of a gun.

"Go it again," said Dick, who had followed him. "Take the next one, and keep on clear to the lower hall. Don't let the polish get cold, or it won't work. Hurry up to hurry down."

Scarcely knowing what he was about, he straddled the rail again, and once more like a rocket did he shoot downward. But this time he clung to the rail tighter, and did not stop at the next floor, but kept on around the turn and went kitting down, overtaking the Irish girl, Joanna, who was going down with a pail of slops.

In about one-half of a second, girl, slops, pail and coon were mixed up in a squirming, howling, tangled mass at the bottom of the stairs, into which Nip leaped, catching Ebenezer by the seat of his trousers, and instantly sampling his meat.

The house was in a perfect uproar, and everybody in it came rushing upon the scene just in time to see that mad Irish girl pounding that prostrate darkey with her slop pail. As for Dick, he ran up stairs and escaped through the skylight, and went into the next house, where one of his chums resided, to wait for the storm to blow over.

"Mercy on me, what is the matter?" demanded Mrs. Plunket.

"Marser Dick set me to polish de rail," said he, getting up and examining the affair as best he could.

"Yes, I suspected that Dick was at the bottom of it. Now, remember, don't you ever again do anything he tells you to," said she.

"All right, mum, I won't," said he, hobbling away.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day Ebenezer received his new livery, and it was just gorgeous.

But after he put it on it was discovered that a great mistake had been made, for it will be remembered that Dick had taken him to the tailor to be measured when his stomach was almost empty, and after he had feasted awhile in the Plunket mansion, he was almost twice as large in his belly portion as he was when measured.

The consequence was that when he came to get out into the new suit, so much of it was taken up around the abdomen that it not only made the legs of his pants about three inches too short, but the sleeves of his coat presented the same appearance.

And so Ebenezer Crow was one of the most comical-looking coons that was ever seen in livery. But, notwithstanding he made almost everybody laugh with whom he came in contact, yet he felt so good in it that he would most undoubtedly have refused to swap places with a first-class king.

Besides, Dick Plunkett assured him that he was all right, and the nobbiest-looking darkey in the business; and this convinced him that he was all right, and no amount of argument or ridicule would have induced him to have it altered.

But Mrs. Plunkett was so much taken up with the thought that he was once the servant of Jeff Davis that she overlooked any little blemish in his make up, and allowed him to have his own way, greatly to the delight of her son Dick.

A week or so passed off without any further mishap, during which Ebenezer was installed into his own place, and taught the duties of his office, although Dick was carefully excluded from any part of his instruction.

But the young rascal had his eye open, and so full of fun and expectation was he, that he never thought of going to the theaters or minstrels, so confident was he that with Ebenezer Crow he could double discount anything he could see anywhere.

But Professor Dinglebus, the brother of Mrs. Plunket, and with whom he was living, all the while had his eye on the main chance.

He was one of those half-crazed speculative old fools who was always going to do great things in some line or other, but failed in quite as many things as he undertook. He was a professor of something (Heaven only knew what); but his mind was continually full of great achievements in which there were numberless fortunes.

His latest hobby was that he could turn a negro white, and now that Ebenezer was installed as a member of the family, he resolved to experiment upon him, and prove the potency of his medicine.

"I tell you," said he, to another old M. D., who was quite as daft as he was, "I am on the stepping-stone to millions."

"You are a great man, professor," said his friend and admirer.

"Well, posterity will settle that. I do not care so much for fame as for money. You know I have laid out to you all my plans, and told you what I intended to do when I had a few millions."

"Yes; nature made you a great philanthropist, professor, and I only hope that you may get the millions which will enable you to carry out your ideas."

"Well, doctor, you know I don't go in for small sums; if I had cared for them, you know, I could have been moderately rich several times."

"I am sure of it, professor."

"In order to carry out my great ideas, I want at least one hundred millions. Now I have been at work for the last year and a half upon the theory that a black man can be turned white. I have brought my whole mind to bear upon the point, and I am sure that I have discovered the right medicine to do it," said he, softly.

"Yours is a great mind, professor."

"Well, I am flattered into that belief. But just look at it! There are at least ten millions of blacks on this continent who wish to be white, and who would give at least ten dollars to be made so. There is one hundred millions of dollars to start with. See?"

"Great brain!" said the doctor, softly.

"Well, that is simply pocket money. In the whole world there are at least one hundred millions of blacks who long to be white. One hundred millions at ten dollars apiece—one billion of dollars!"

"Gigantic intellect!"

"Well, we will not follow the thing any further. That gives you an idea of what money there is in the thing; and, doctor, I shall look out for my friends, of course. Understand?"

"You are a wonderful man, professor."

"We'll leave that to history. Of course it will make a great sensation in the world, and I shall be in everybody's mouth. But you know I am a philosopher, and can stand that sort of a thing without getting elated. But it will enable me to carry out some of the grand ideas of charity and education which I have cherished so long."

"The world will own you for a benefactor."

"Yes, most likely. But you know how I am: a plain, straightforward sort of a man, and if I succeed in this, I will allow history to deal with me as it sees fit."

"Oh, it will make a god of you, professor."

"We shall see."

Ebenezer Crow knew nothing of the deep and scientific designs that the professor had regarding him, and so, of course, was not on his guard.

But the old man was deeply, darkly in earnest on the subject, and after having concocted his medicine, he waited a favorable opportunity to give it to him, and thereby revolutionize and sensationalize the world.

And Dick, of course, knew nothing about it, but knowing that his uncle was up to all sorts of insane notions, he watched him closely.

Well, one afternoon Ebenezer was going about the house, duster in hand; he pushed his head into the professor's study.

"Am dere any dust here?" he asked.

"Well, Ebenezer, you may dust my room, if you have have a mind to," said the professor, pleasantly.

"Oh, duster, duster am my name,
I dust de tables an' de chairs;
An' if I live until I die,
I hope ter dust de golden stairs,"

he sang, as he began to go over the professor's room.

"You seem in good spirits to-day, Ebenezer."

"Putty good spirats fo' a poor boy," said Eh.

"Don't you sometimes wish you were a white man?"

"Waal, boss, de white man hab mo' money, mo' cheek, mo' chances fo' ter eucher de debil dan

culled pusson hab, but dey don't hab half de fun."

"But only think if you could be changed into a white man without any trouble; if all the glory that fall upon our race could be partaken of by you, what would you say?"

"Waal, boss, I wouldn't 'ject if I didn't lose de soft thing dat I hab grafted myself to in dis place."

"Oh, that's all right. You shall lose nothing; I will guarantee that beyond a doubt. Now I have a medicine, which I have discovered, which will turn a black man white, and take all the kinks out of his hair, and I propose to try it on you first. What say?"

"Wait one minute, boss. You won't try it on any odder culled pusson but me?"

This did not exactly accord with the tremendous ideas that he had formed, but for the sake of having a subject for his first experiment, he concluded to dissemble a trifle, and so he agreed to it.

"Am dat medshun bad fo' ter take?"

"Oh, no. On the contrary, it is very pleasant. You shall try a dose."

"Fotch on yer dose," said Ebenezer, who was ready for almost anything.

The old professor was delighted. The future and its millions loomed up before him, and without a moment's loss of time, he proceeded to bring out his wonderful medicine, which was to revolutionize the world.

"Am it a defection, boss?"

"No; it is a medicine to swallow. Take a seat in my chair, there, and I will soon show you."

"Go easy, now, boss; fo' I am a delercate chile, you mus' remember."

"Oh, you need have no fears."

"How long afo' it works, boss?" he asked, taking a seat in the chair.

"In the course of fifteen or twenty minutes. Here it is. A very harmless medicine, I assure you. It is a sort of an elixir of life."

"Licks her! Am it fightin' rum?"

"No; nothing of the kind."

"Didn't know but it war; seein' dat dar war licks her in it; I hab drink plenty ob dat, but it neber make me turn white, although I wake up in de mornin' many times feelin' drefful blue."

"You need have no fears. You will hardly know that you have taken it, so gentle is it in its operations."

"Do it put me out ob sight?"

"Do what?"

"Am it like dis yer toof-pullin' dat yer don't know nuffin' 'bout it?"

"No—no; you will be perfectly conscious all the while; and, as I said before, you will scarcely know that you have taken anything at all."

"Brung on yer medshun; I's waitin'."

"Throw your head right back and swallow the contents of the glass," said the professor, handing him a goblet, filled with some sort of liquid which he had prepared.

"Wait a minit, boss."

"What is it?"

"Am dar any spendin' money goes wid dis yer?"

"Spending money! Why, am I not about to confer upon you the greatest boon that it is in the power of gods or mortals to bestow?"

"Maybe dat am so, but spendin' money am mighty handy ter have 'bout yer, boss."

"All right. Here is a dollar."

"Now I 'gins fo' ter see it. Fire away."

"Drink this right down."

"All right, boss; heah she goes, an' may de bes' man win in de long run," said Ebenezer, drinking the concoction without hesitation.

But the moment it was down he began to roll his eyes around in a strange way.

"Boss, dat yer am wuss dan moonshine whiskey."

"Oh, that's all right. You won't feel it after a moment; keep perfectly quiet, and calmly give way to its influences," said the professor, nervously.

"By golly, boss, it's a burnin' in me!"

"That feeling will soon pass away."

"Gib me some wata!" he cried.

"No—no; water will spoil the effect; you must not taste a drop of water."

"Hold on, dar; I's gwine ter bust!" said he, leaping up from the chair, and holding on to his sides.

"No; sit down, and let me note the effects."

"I am pised!"

"No—no; you're all right," said the professor, trying to push him back into the chair.

"Look out fo' me; I's gettin' bad!"

"Be quiet, and let me note the effect of the medicine."

Whatever the stuff was which he had given

him, it was having a curious effect upon him, and every moment he was becoming wilder and harder to manage.

"Look out fo' me, I tole yer!" he cried, struggling with the old professor.

"Keep quiet; it's working."

"Yas, it am a wukin' bad. Look out fo' dat mule!" said he, pushing the old man aside, and springing from the chair like a madman.

"Please keep quiet, Ebenezer. Don't spoil my great experiment. There are millions trembling in the balance. Do keep quiet."

But by this time Ebenezer was a maniac from the effects of the drug he had taken, and he began to tear around the room like mad.

"Hold on, Ebenezer Crow—hold on!"

Ebenezer, however, was under the influence, and seemed to have no notion of anything in particular but the smashing and upsetting of things.

The first thing he did was to shy the chair at the professor, which he dodged, however, only to allow it to smash a chandelier. Then he tipped over the old man's study table, and threw some of his scientific machines through a big mirror, after which he began pelting him with books, reports, and everything he could lay hands upon, while the old man shouted and tried to pacify him.

Dick Plunket was attracted to the spot by the uproar, and entered the room just in time to see the fun at its height.

"Stan' clar, dar, fo' I's comin'!" shouted Eben.

"Hold on, Ebenezer, for mercy sake, hold on!" cried the old professor.

But Eben raised a retort, full of some sort of acid, to throw at him, and he darted under a table that stood in the corner of the room.

Not seeing anybody to throw it at, he chucked it through the window.

"Stop him, somebody—stop him!" yelled the old man.

"Stan' clar, I've got 'em!" catching up a big bottle of ink, and baptizing the old man with it in such an effective manner that he looked as black as he did.

He was worse than a bull in a china shop, and in less than three minutes he had wrecked nearly everything in the room.

"Go it, Ebenezer!" said Dick.

"Go 'way dar, chile!" yelled Eben, chucking an experiment at him.

Dick thought it only fun up to this point; but when he saw this, he dusted out, and the wild Ebenezer had it all his own way.

It was not long, however, before Mrs. Plunket and every member of the household came running to the scene, wondering if a tornado had struck the house.

"Ebenezer, what is the matter?" cried Mrs. Plunket.

"I's got 'em!" he yelled, firing a book in her direction; but which she dodged just in time to let it hit the cook, Assafidity Brown, square in the face.

"Behave yourself, Ebenezer!" said his mistress.

"I broke his big head fo' him," said the cook.

"He's got the jim-jams, mammy," said Dick.

"Brother, where are you?"

"Here. Send for a policeman."

"Ebenezer, behave yourself, I say!"

"Stan' clar, dar!" he yelled, hurling another book through the clock.

"Mercy—mercy, what is the matter?—what have you been doing to him, brother?"

"Nothing, I—!" said the professor, watching his opportunity, and crawling from his retreat.

"And what in Heaven's name is the matter with you?" she exclaimed, starting back as he came towards her.

"He—he threw the ink on me," said he, wiping his face with his coat sleeve.

By this time Ebenezer had quieted down a trifle, and had fallen back into the chair, as though completely exhausted.

"What did you do to him, unc?" asked Dick.

"Nothing, only—"

"Oh, I am sure you have been doing something to him," said Mrs. Plunket.

"Well, I tried a dose of my medicine on him," said he, meekly.

"Your medicine! Goodness gracious, and perhaps you have poisoned him! Run for the doctor, Dick."

"All right," and away he skipped.

"Brother, you are a perfect nuisance about my house. Only to think, and he was once the servant of Jefferson Davis. Oh, you wretch!"

"But only think, sister, of my great discovery."

"Oh, your great fiddlesticks! If you don't stop your experiments, I will not tolerate you in my house."

"That's the way; join right in with the world, and help to crush me," said he, mournfully.

"I'd like to crush a little common sense into you," said she, spitefully. "Poor Ebenezer! I am sure you have killed him," she added, cautiously approaching the now sleeping victim.

"Don't disturb him. The elixir is just beginning to work," said he, excitedly.

"I only wish you had taken it yourself."

At that moment Dick came bounding up stairs, followed by a doctor, who had a huge stomach pump in his hand.

"There he is, doc. Pump him out," said Dick.

"Has he taken poison?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, a quart of it. Run out your hose and get in your sucker."

"Oh, doctor, save him, if possible, for he was once the servant of Jefferson Davis," said Mrs. Plunket, excitedly.

"All right; but we must get him down on his back, first."

"I'll help dump him, doc," said Dick, attempting to pull Ebenezer from the chair.

But it took the combined strength of both of them to get him down and into position, and then the doctor seized his pump and straddled him, while the bewildered professor stood by and watched the performance without saying a word. His inky mug expressed it all.

As luck would have it a stomach pump was just the thing needed, and presently the professor's vile concoction began to be pulled up, while his victim groaned and grunted under the operation.

"There goes all my glory!" he moaned, as he saw his wonderful medicine pulled from the stomach of the unconscious darkey.

In the course of five minutes Ebenezer began to revive, and after he had drank a cup of strong coffee, he felt something like himself again.

But what a looking room that was!

The professor looked quite as bad as his study did, for in addition to the ink on his face and person, he wore a look of mental injury. The fame and fortune he had dreamed so fondly of had been banished by the suction of a stomach pump!

"How do you feel now, Ebenezer?" asked Mrs. P.

"Missus Plunket, I feel just like I hab been on a ten days' drunk," said he.

"I am so sorry. It was all my brother's fault. But you must be very careful hereafter and never take anything he gives you," said she.

"Crushed again!" moaned the professor.

"By golly, if I catch him foolin' 'round me any mo', I bust he crust."

"He looks as though you had tapped his pelt now," said Dick, laughing.

"What am de matter wid you, boss?"

"Matter! Look at my study."

"Guess you'll have to study awhile longer, unc, before you succeed in turning a black man white. In fact, I think he has beaten you, for he has turned a white man black," said Dick, laughing.

"I ken tole yer one thing, boss; whitewash am de only thing dat'll turn a brack man white."

"Crushed—crushed!" said the professor, starting for the bath-room for the purpose of washing himself.

The doctor pronounced Ebenezer out of danger, and took his leave, while the other members of the family scattered in various directions. But it cost at least a hundred dollars to put the old man's room into as good order as it was before he tried his great experiment on Ebenezer Crow.

It was a terrible blow to him, and he came to the conclusion to lay low with his future experiments and administer his great medicine on the sly.

As for Dick, he enjoyed the affair hugely, and of course told his friends all about it, so that the wise old professor soon found his fame extending, even though he had not succeeded in turning a black man white.

Dick and Ebenezer had become fast friends, even with the memory of the stair rail before him; but of course the young rogue only kept friendship with him just for the fun he could have with him, for in spite of all, Eben would believe all he said and do whatever he required.

One day when his mother was to have a large number of people to dinner, Dick put up a job for Ebenezer to work out, which afforded him much fun, if nobody else enjoyed it.

Eben, in his comical new livery, was to wait on the table, and Dick bought about two pounds of limburger cheese, some of the loudest in the land, and after cutting it up in pieces, he gave them to Ebenezer and told him to roll one of them up in the napkin of each guest.

"Phew! he smell heap stronger dan any weddin' dat I eber heah tell on," said he, never having seen any of it before.

"Oh, that's all right. It is hudood cheese."
 "By golly, I should think it war hudood by a sick skunk."

"Never mind. It will put money in your pocket."

"How dat, Dicky?"

"Why, the cheese will affect the company so that each one of them will give you at least a dollar."

"Am dat so fo' a fac'?"

"Of course it is. Never known to fail. Try it."

"Honey, I'll play fo' dem dolla's, shuah," said he, and he followed instructions regarding the placing of the limburger in each napkin.

Dick made it a point not to be in at that dinner, although he was near enough at hand to note the effect.

The table was set out in splendid style, for Eben had a reputation at stake, and being handy and tasty at such things, he managed to please his mistress greatly.

"How beautifully your table is set," said a lady guest.

"Yes, I have a rare jewel in a servant. He was at one time the body servant of Jefferson Davis," said Mrs. Plunket, proudly.

The ladies and gents took their places at the table, and as soup was the first course, they all unrolled their napkins, of course, and of bourse they all found the limburger cheese. At all events, their noses found it if their eyes did not, and instantly there was a general pinching of noses.

Ebenezer was looking on with a grin, expecting to see everybody come out with a dollar for him; but to his great dismay they all got up and left the room.

"Ebenezer, what does this mean?" demanded Mrs. P.

"A dollar apiece, ma'am," said he, grinning.

"Oh, this is too much!" said she, pinching her nose.

"Waal, Dicky tole me dat it war good for a dollar."

"Dick! Oh, the scoundrell! Where is he?"

Dick in the meantime had met several of the guests, and told them that it was one of Eben's little jokes, and so when he came out into the entry to see what the trouble was, they caught him and rubbed his head, face, ears, and eyes full of the limburger, making him stink so bad that he was obliged to go and bury himself in order to exist, while Dick slid out as usual to wait for the storm to blow over.

CHAPTER III.

It took Ebenezer Crow fully a week to recover from the medicine which Professor Dinglebus gave him for the purpose of turning him into a white man.

"No mo' fo' me," said he to Dick Plunket, one day. "No—no! I's done gone took all the medsun dat I wants."

"But wouldn't you like to be a white man?" asked the young rogue.

"I guess I war duu gone made fo' a nigger, an' dat all de medsun in de world won't fect me."

"Gracious! I thought that affected you very much," said Dick, laughing; "and I guess the old man thinks so, for it cost him about five hundred dollars to repair things. Good gracious, how you did tear around that room!"

"Golly, guess he won't gib me any mo' ob dat patent medsun ob his'n," and Eben showed all the bones he had in his mouth.

"No; or if he does, he will most likely take care to lock you into a burglar-proof safe while you are under the effects of it," said Dick.

Mrs. Plunket manifested a deal of anxiety on account of Ebenezer, for it will be remembered that she felt very proud of him because he had given her a big hunk of "taffy" about once being the body servant of Jeff Davis. Her family physician was constantly attending upon him, and he got him all right again about the time that the old professor got his study fixed up.

It was a wonder that the crazy old fool didn't kill him, for the mess which he gave him was powerful enough to have killed a horse, and the family physician warned him that if he attempted such a thing again, he would report it to the police.

"They think to crush me!" the old man muttered. "They think to prevent the working of this big brain. But genius will triumph yet. All of us great men have to encounter such obstacles. There was Sir Isaac Newton—"

At this instant Dick opened a trap containing a rat which his black and tan was trying hard

to sample, and he darted into the professor's room, the door of which stood ajar, followed by the eager dog.

"Sic him, Nip!" shouted Dick.

But Nip didn't need any "sicing," for the greatest joy in his life consisted in the worrying of and catching rats, and the way he did go for that rodent was a caution. Under the table, between the old man's legs, under chairs, tipping them over and upsetting everything that could be upset, he went in hot pursuit of Mr. Rat.

"Hold on—hold on! Scat! Get out! Call him off!" shouted the professor, dancing around the room.

"Sic him, Nip!" shouted Dick, clapping his hands and encouraging the sport, just as though his uncle was not there.

"Get out! Call him off!" yelled the old man, and while he was dancing around, the dog got between his legs just as he seized the rat, and tripped him up in such a way that he fell upon a glass retort and smashed it into a hundred pieces. In fact, Nip and the rat succeeded in making almost as much of a wreck of the place as Ebenezer did.

"Oh—oh—oh!" he roared, while his sister, Dich's mother, ran to see what the riot was.

"Good boy! Shake him!" said Dick, and Nip just did shake the machinery right out of that rat.

"Oh—oh! I am murdered!"

"In Heaven's name, what is the matter here?" demanded Mrs. Plunket.

"Nip has caught a rat," said Dick, joyfully.

"But what is your uncle doing there?"

"Oh, he and Nip both went for the rat, but Nip beat him," and Dick laughed heartily.

"It is false, sister," said the old man, picking himself up out of the wreck; "he let the rat in here just on purpose; I know he did."

"Nixy, unc; your door was open, and Nip chased him in, that's all."

"All!" both mother and uncle exclaimed.

"I couldn't help it. Why didn't you keep your door shut?"

"Look at this ruin! And all for a rat."

"Richard, you are a very bad boy, and forever doing some mischief. If you don't behave yourself, I shall send you away to school," said his mother.

"That would be just old peaches. But what am I to be blamed for? Don't dogs take to rats? And are they to blame for taking them whenever they can get 'em? Well, I guess so."

"Go away with that horrid dog and rat."

"All right, mammy. Come, Nip, old boy. Bring your rat along."

And away he went, followed by his four-legged companion.

"Only to think, when I had just got fixed up again, and was on the eve of another great discovery."

She turned away without making any reply, for she knew about how great his discoveries always were. But she allowed him to have a study in her house, and even assisted him in his wonderful researches, just to keep him out of mischief, or something worse.

Calling Ebenezer, she ordered him to go to the old man's room, and assist in fixing it up, and he at once obeyed.

"Halloo, professor! wha' am de matter now? Hab yer been givin' some mo' medsun ter somebody?" said he, as he entered the door.

"No; that rascally Dick got his dog in here after a rat, and made all this ruin," said the old man, as he gazed mournfully around.

"Ya—ya—ya!" laughed the darkey.

"If somebody would only murder that boy, it would be doing a good thing for society, and save the expense of hanging him hereafter. I am nearly killed. Just see if you can discover any pieces of glass sticking into me," said he, pulling up his coat and bending over.

"No, boss, I don't see none; but if dey am dar, I spec you'll feel 'em fo' long," said Eben, laughing.

"Oh, dear, I know that boy will be the death of me yet. Help put things to rights, and I'll return in a moment," said he, going from the room.

"By golly, de ole man am allus in some kind ob tribulation," and he began to examine things in the room. "Guess dat he warn't born lucky, somehow. Wonder what am dis yer?" he mused, approaching a district telegraph box. "Spec it am some ob his 'shinery," and he began fooling with the alarm crank, turning it until he had unknowingly sent alarms for two or three messenger boys, some firemen and policemen. "Makes funny sort o' music," he muttered, and then turned to look at something else.

Just then the professor returned, and together

they began to pick up the broken things, and put the room to rights once more.

But they had scarcely got to work when there was a great commotion heard down stairs, for Dick had admitted the firemen with their Babcock extinguishers on their backs, the policemen with drawn clubs, and three messenger boys. He instantly suspected that Ebenezer had been fooling with the alarm telegraph, and so he directed them up stairs to the professor's study.

The next instant the police charged into the room, followed by the firemen and messengers.

The police charged and the firemen discharged the contents of their extinguishers, and both Ebenezer and the old man were nearly murdered.

The whole house was in an uproar in an instant, and Nip rushed in to get his share of the fun out of it.

Everybody but the professor and Eben shouted for the police, and they yelled murder.

It was a red hot time, and nobody knew what it was all about.

In less than five shakes of a sick goat's tail, that study was a worse wreck than ever before, and it was fully five minutes before anything like order was restored, during which time the neighbors had rushed into the house, expecting to find it on fire, and a crowd gathered in the street, waiting to see the fire engines arrive.

"Where's the fire, anyway?" demanded the firemen, after having nearly suffocated everybody with the gas from their machines.

"What's the matter?" asked the policemen.

"Who called for a messenger?" quoth the boys.

"There is no fire; there is nothing the matter; nobody sent for messengers!" screamed the professor.

"What?" and the policemen were about to go for him again with their clubs.

Ebenezer Crow got under the table.

"Hold, officers! There's a mistake," said the Widow Plunket, beseechingly.

"No, ma'am; an alarm was sent for the police."

"And for the firemen."

"And for three messengers."

"No—no; it is some dreadful mistake. What does it mean, brother?"

"Don't ask me, sister. They've murdered me!" moaned the old man.

"What d'yer say? I've a good mind ter take ye in, onyway, for bein' drunk," said the policeman.

"No—no; he never drinks," said Mrs. Plunket.

"Then he's a bloody old fool, and oughter be taken in, onyway."

"Ebenezer, where are you?" she asked.

"I amn't nowhar, missus," said he, looking out.

"What does this all mean?"

"I gibs it up, missus. I thought as how dat it war one ob your reg'lar luxuries, an' I war a-tryin' fo' ter get used ter it."

"Come out o' that!" demanded one of the officers.

"I's comin', boss," and he crawled out from his retreat, and looked timidly around.

"Gentlemen, I beg of you to leave my house; for it is quite evident that a great mistake has been made."

"Well, don't let it happen again," said the officers, charging upon the neighbors, and rushing them out into the street.

In the meantime, two or three steam fire engines had come upon the scene, but finding nothing to do, they were quietly going away again, followed by the disappointed crowd.

And yet nobody knew what had kicked up the rumpus, although Dick shrewdly suspected.

After the house was once more clear, the old professor began for a second time to take an account of the smashes and losses. The few things which Nip had left unbroken were well knocked up now, and misery was on everyone's face.

"Ebenezer, did you fool with this?" asked Dick, pointing to the telegraph.

"No, not much," replied Eben.

"Not much?"

"I only turn de crank 'round a few times."

A loud laugh followed this confession.

"Oh, Ebenezer, you must never touch that instrument," said Mrs. Plunket.

"But you don't go fo' ter tell me dat jus' turnin' dat little ting got up all dis yer row."

"To be sure it did. That is a telegraph."

"Am dat so?" he asked, going up to it.

"Yes, and you sent out an alarm of fire, a signal for police officers, and for messengers. But be careful never to touch it again."

"Fo' de lord, missus, dat am wonderful."

"Look at this ruin! Look at my wounds!"

moaned the professor; "and all on your account, Master Dick," he added, savagely.

"My account?"

"Yes; for had you not let your dog into the room, there would have been no necessity for Ebenezer's being here, therefore he would not have meddled with the telegraph."

"That's right, lay it all to me."

"Richard, I am sorry to say he speaks the truth. You are a very bad boy," said his mother.

"Of course. Guess I'll go drown myself."

"Dicky, dar am a debil in you as big as a groun' hog," put in Ebenezer.

"All right, I'm to blame," replied Dick, in a grieved tone of voice, as he walked away.

Well, it took another week to repair the damages to the room and furniture, but by that time the hard feelings had blown by, and the affair was laughed over by every one but the professor. He mourned almost continually for the ruin which had fallen upon his great discoveries.

But in the course of time the old man was deep in his experiments again, and now he proposed to startle the world by showing the truth of alchemy, or the art of turning the baser metals into gold.

He felt sure that he had found the secret, and that untold wealth was to be his. Meantime he made considerable use of Ebenezer Crow, although he made so many blunders that he put him back quite as much as he assisted him.

But yet the old man delighted to have him around as an assistant, and he managed to work him up to the highest pitch of expectation by telling him that he would make him as rich as Vanderbilt if he would only assist him, and keep everything a most dark and profound secret.

Finally the day arrived on which he was to complete his great discovery. His study was full of all sorts of traps and vessels, and Ebenezer was in attendance.

"I must have some fresh water," said he.

"Fo' ter drink?" asked Ebenezer.

"No—no, blockhead! to continue my great experiment. Throw that out of the window into the back yard," said he, pointing to a pitcher, and meaning the dirty water it contained.

"Frow it out?" said Eben, taking up the pitcher.

"Yes—yes; don't bother me with idle questions when my brain is so busy!" and he turned to his book for further information.

Ebenezer looked at the pitcher of water, then out of the window, then at the professor again.

"Heave it out?" he asked, at length.

"Heave it out, stupid! Do as I bid you, or you shall have none of the gold I make."

The darkey stood a moment, and then chucked the pitcher, water and all, right through the window, smashing the glass and making a great racket.

The professor leaped to his feet.

"What in thunder have you done?"

"Heaved de pitcher out de winder," said Eben, innocently.

"Oh, you stupid jackass!"

"Didn't yer tole me ter?"

"Toll you! Why, you grinning idiot, I told you to throw the water out and get some fresh."

"Den why didn't you say so? You tole me ter frow it out der winder; how'd I know but dat it war part ob yer speriment."

"Oh, you donkey! Now this has so upset me that I may fail in my great experiment. Leave the room!"

"Leave it? Didn't 'spect dat I war gwine fo' ter took it 'long wid me, did yer?"

"Go—go! No, stay and get me another pitcher."

Eben sauntered down to the kitchen and got another pitcher, which he brought up stairs.

"Put it into the big bowl," said the professor, without looking up.

He placed the pitcher into the bowl, and stood waiting for further orders.

"What have you done?"

"Put de pitcher in de bowl."

"Nonsense! Put the water into the bowl."

"Dar ain't any water, boss."

"Why didn't you bring some?"

"Yer didn't tell me to, boss."

"You know better—in fact, you know that you lie like a sailor!"

"You tole me fo' to git anudder pitcher, an' dere it am. You tole me ter put it in der bowl; an' dere it am," said he, with great deliberation.

"Now go and get some water. See if you know enough for that."

"Guess I mus' be a fool nigger if I don't know 'nough fo' dat," said he, going from the room.

Going to the kitchen, he took a big drink of water, and sat down for a chat with the cook.

But presently the old man became impatient, and rang his bell violently. Ebenezer lugged his fat body up stairs again.

"Where is that water I told you to get?" he demanded.

"I drank it, sah."

"Drank it! Oh, great Job! What did I tell you?"

"Tolle me to go down an' get some water, an' so I did—got a good drink."

"But, you big black chunk of stupidity, I wanted you to get some water in the pitcher."

"Den why didn't you tole me so?"

"I thought you knew enough for that. Now take that pitcher, go down stairs, fill it with water, and bring it up here. Do you understand that?"

"Of cos I does. Tink I's a fool?"

"Well, we will see."

Ebenezer left with the pitcher.

"Oh, what stupid people do we great men have to accept for our assistants! When I come to think of it, I almost wonder at the inventions and great discoveries that have been made."

The coon soon returned, this time with the pitcher full of water as directed.

"Yer see, boss, I habn't got much larnin', so yer muss talk right smart plain ter me," said he.

"Don't talk to me, now. I'm getting to it."

"Gittin' ter what?"

"Gold, my great discovery. Hush!" and the great man tapped his forehead with his finger.

"Go it, boss!"

"Hush! Don't speak a word," said he, and taking the contents of several vials, he began to pour them into a copper dish in which he thought there was placed a short bar of iron which he proposed to transmute into gold.

Now Ebenezer had in his blundering way placed a bar of yellow soap in the dish, substituting it for the bar of iron, which he threw aside. The effect of the acids upon the soap was little or nothing, and although Eben had forgotten what he had done, he stood by in silence to watch the great experiment.

"Now wait. Five minutes will do it! Can't you sing a hymn? That might assist the work."

"Church music?"

"Yes; and the more solemn the better."

"How'll 'Ole Hundred' do?"

"Too slow. Try one a little quicker."

"All right. Here goes;" and he started to sing that beautiful old tune:

"Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy strength I come."

"That's it. Sing louder!"

Eben worked his bellows as hard as he could.

"There's millions in it. Think, you black dodo—think of millions in gold!"

The darkey did think; but he kept right on raising his Ebenezer, nearly raising the top of his head at the same time.

"Stop! The charm's wound up," said he.

"Nineteen mo' wusses if yer wants 'em, boss."

"No—no. Now let's let's see the result."

Going to the vessel, he removed the cover, turned off the acids, and lo! there was the yellow bar of soap.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed the professor, more like a maniac than anything else. "Victory—victory—victory!"

He shouted so loud, as he danced around the room, that it brought everybody to see what the matter was.

"Look there—look there!" he said, pointing to the vessel in which lay the bar of yellow soap. "See that bar of yellow gold! Five minutes ago that was a bar of base iron. Now look at it; now tell me again that I am a fool!"

Dick and his mother approached to take a look.

"Fame and fortune are mine now; the world is mine!" and again he laughed wildly.

"What's the matter with you?" asked his sister.

"Off your base, ar'n't you, unc?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Gold—gold! bright and shining gold!"

"Where?"

"Why, look there!"

"That! Why, that's only a bar of soap."

"By golly, dat war what he said he war gwine ter make, 'soap,'" said Eben.

"Soap!" said the professor, softly, while a change came over his face.

"Yes, that's only a bar of soap. And have you been making all this uproar about a bar of soap?"

"Off your nut, old man," said Dick.

"Soap!" he articulated, in a faint whisper, as he approached to take a closer look at the result of his great experiment.

"Now please don't make such a fool of yourself again," said Mrs. Plunket, going from the room.

The old professor was utterly overcome. For the life of him he couldn't understand it, and even Eben had forgotten about putting the soap in the vessel.

"So you have started a soap manufactory, have you, unc?" asked Dick, laughing heartily. "Well, that's the best thing you have ever done yet."

"What does it mean?" the old man mused.

"I guess it means that the acids war so strong dat dey turn dat chunk of iron ter soap," suggested Eben.

"Can it be?"

"Great brain!" said Dick. "Thought you had struck a gold mine and found it only a soap mine, did you? Better work it."

"There must be a mistake somewhere; I put a bar of iron in there and—"

"Here it is now, I guess," said Dick, picking it up.

"Sure enough! Where did that soap come from?"

"Boss, I 'spect as how dat I took de iron out an' put in de soap," said Eben, seriously.

"Crushed again! The very fiends of darkness are conspired against me!" and he flopped into a chair containing acid enough to burn the seat of his pantaloons out as quickly as a red hot stove would have done it, and he got up quite as quickly as he would had he sat down on a warm article of that kind.

"Quick! Get the sweet oil! I'm burning!" he cried, dancing around and rubbing himself.

Ebenezer flew around, and it was just his luck to get hold of a pot of green paint and to slap it on to the professor's burning posterior. This made matters worse, and for the next half hour the very devil was to pay in that room.

Dick laughed and held his sides, and even his dog, Nip, appeared to enjoy it; but finally, when he saw the women folks coming, the old man made a dash out into the hallway and darted up into his room, from which he did not venture for several days.

That settled his great achievement of making gold, and it was several weeks before he could eat his meals sitting down, as he had always done before. But it was a long time before he heard the last of that soap business.

CHAPTER IV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many mishaps which befell Ebenezer, he was just the happiest darkey in New York; for he was well fed, clothed and provided for, and his mistress, Mrs. Plunket, was very fond of him, because he had once been the body servant of Jeff Davis, (as he said), and she was indulgent to almost any degree.

If anything happened she was sure to lay it either to her son, Dick, or her brother, Professor Dinglebus, and so it will be seen that Eben had a decidedly soft thing of it as man servant in the aristocratic Plunket mansion.

Dick, however, found a whole circus in Eben, and worked out more fun through him than he had with everything else combined.

But the old professor didn't make much headway with Eben, any more than he did with anything else. And yet he worked on in his little study, fully determined on making a noise in the world that should make him immortal.

His numerous experiments interested Eben very much, even though he didn't succeed in making gold, and whenever he had nothing else to do, he would steal into the room and watch the great genius at his labors, or nose around in the professor's absence to see what he could find.

And now and then the old man would try some experiment or other on him, although he never attempted anything quite so extravagant and ridiculous as trying to turn him white; and in fact, after the experience which Eben had on the other occasion when he did attempt it, the old fellow could never get any more medicine into him.

There was no question, however, but that Professor Dinglebus rather liked to have the darkey about, for he was about the only person in the family whom he could impress with a belief in his own importance; and had it not been for that young mischief, Dick, he could have got along with him all right.

Meantime, Eben had become quite familiar with his duties, and managed to attend to them after a fashion, although he was continually

making blunders, or somebody was making them for him.

Dick got him into an awkward dilemma soon after the events of the last chapter.

His mother had three or four ladies to dinner, one afternoon, and of course Ebenezer, dressed in his showy livery, had to wait upon the table.

It was a very "tony" affair, and Mrs. Plunket took particular pains to show off her colored man, hoping thereby to make her guests green with envy.

"Now, Ebenezer," she said, when she entered the dining-room to see if dinner was ready, "I want you to do your best this afternoon."

"Yes'm," replied Eben.

"Put on all the style you have got about you."

"Yes'm."

"Show my friends some of your fancy work."

"Yes'm."

"Show them how servants attend down south."

"Yes'm."

"And if I order anything, be sure and follow my instructions to the very letter."

And he did. He felt his importance, and put in some very fancy work while dancing around that table, and waiting upon the company. And Mrs. Plunket put him right to his trumps for the sake of showing him off as a black jewel of great value.

"Ebenezer."

"Yes'm."

"Have you some tomatoes?"

"Yes'm."

"Be good enough to bring some."

"Yes'm," and he started for the kitchen.

"And, Ebenezer!"

"Yes'm."

"Be good enough to serve them undressed."

"Yes'm," and he left the room. "What de debil am de meanin' ob dat?" he mused, as he scratched his head over the order. "Tomatoes undressed! Waal, by golly, dat beats me, fo' shuah!"

In the hallway he met Dick, his evil genius. "Halloo, Eb, what's it like?" he asked, briskly.

"Marser Dick, I—I'm puzzled somehow."

"Who did it, the professor?"

"No, your mudder."

"What's the old gal been doing?"

"Waal, Dick, she tole me fo' ter serve some tomatoes 'undressed.' Now how am dat?"

"Why, simplest thing in the world. Undress yourself."

"Go 'way, Marser Dick. What you gib me?"

"No taffy. Honest Indian."

"What! undress myself and serve de tomatoes?"

"To be sure."

"But what am dat fo'?"

"Because it's 'tony.' All the nabobs in Europe do it in that way, and the old gal is on the show off. See? Where are the tomatoes?"

"Down in de kitchen."

"All right. You go into the back room there and strip, and I'll go down and get the tomatoes," said Dick, starting for the kitchen stairs.

"By golly, dat am de wus I eber hearn. But I s'pose I got ter do it; got ter keep up de tone, if it takes de las' dud of clothes off," and going into the back room he quietly stripped himself down to his underclothing.

Dick was quickly around. He felt that he had too good a thing on hand to slight.

"Now, then, here you are," said he, handing him a dish of raw tomatoes. "Go right in and serve them."

"All right; but you is suah dat dis am de way?"

"To be sure it is. You ought to be posted on fancy waiting. Go ahead."

Dick would have been all the happier if Eben had been "undressed" to the skin.

He followed along behind him until he reached the dining-room door, and then darted under a table in the hall so as to hear, if he did not see, the fun.

The next moment Ebenezer entered the room, and the very next there was a screaming of women and a laughing of men.

Eben was slightly confused as he went toward where Mrs. Plunket sat; but she also screamed and motioned him away.

"Why, Ebenezer Crow, what does this mean?" she demanded, sharply.

"Didn't you tell me ter serve 'em undressed."

"Stupid! I meant serve the tomatoes undressed. Go from the room instantly!"

"I—I, asked Marser Dick, an' he tole me," said he; and a roar of laughter followed.

"Yes—yes, I'll warrant that young rascal

had a hand in the business. Leave the room, sir."

"Yes'm," and setting down the dish, he wheeled and darted out of the room.

This episode broke up the dinner party, and, all blushes and laughter, the company retired to the parlor.

As for Ebenezer, he knew now that Dick had put the job up on him, and if his head hadn't been thicker than a plank he would have seen it at the very start.

"By golly, dar amn't no use, I'se got fo' ter kill dat boy—tear him all ter pieces," he muttered, as he proceeded to hurry into his clothes.

As for Dick, he got out from under that table and out of the house just as quickly as possible, so that when his mother sent for him he was nowhere to be found.

And he kept out of the way until the next morning, during which time both his mother's and Ebenezer's anger had somewhat subsided.

"Go 'way dar!" said Eben.

"What's the matter, Eb?" asked Dick, calmly.

"Go 'way dar, I tole yer!"

"Off your nut, Eben?"

"I don't want nuffin' to do wid you."

"All right, I'm satisfied."

"What you do? Ax me dat," said Eben, getting the maddest Dick had ever seen him.

"Good many things. Why?"

"What you do 'bout dem tomatoes?"

"I didn't do anything about them."

"Yes you did."

"Did you serve them undressed?" asked Dick, as a mischievous smile stole over his face.

"You best keep clea' ob me, I tole yer."

"Bad man?"

"Don't you fo'get it, honey."

"Carry a razor?"

"You wants to keep clear ob me, I tole yer."

"Did you make a hit with the tomatoes?"

"I make a hit wid you, fus' you know."

"Mammy tickled?"

"She tickle you wid a club, for shuah, honey."

"Didn't she like it?"

"You find out."

"Well, the trouble was, you were not stripped down fine enough."

"What dat?"

"The old gal was mad because you didn't strip right down to the hide."

"Go 'way, dar!"

"Fact. She tole me that you didn't know your business a cent's worth."

"Dat am some mo' ob you nonsense."

"She says that you may be all very well for common waiting, but that you can't do anything fancy."

"Did she say dat?"

"To be sure."

"By golly, I fink dat I made a fancy joke ob dem tomatoes," said he, while a big grin overspread his black mug.

"Oh, no, it was slouchy. Guess the old gal will give you the grand bounce."

"De professor say dat it war scandalous."

"Oh, he's a soap-maker."

"And you are a mischief-maker," said his mother, entering the room.

Ebenezer grinned himself almost to pieces, for he expected to see her "go for him."

"What's the matter, mammy?" asked Dick.

"Don't ask me such a question as that. How could you do such a shameful thing?"

"Why, what did I do?"

"The idea of your putting Ebenezer up to such a thing. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"I think that Eben is the one to be ashamed."

"To some extent, yes. Ebenezer," she said, turning to him.

"Yes'm."

"Haven't I told you repeatedly never to do what this mischievous fellow tells you?"

"Yes'm, but—"

"Don't you dare to disobey me again. Only to think how I shall be scandalized."

"Yes'm. But I didn't know what you meant by servin' 'em 'undressed,' an' I axed him."

"The very thing you should not have done. Why didn't you go and ask the cook?"

"I will nex' time. You bet I won't let him make a fool ob me again like dat."

But that threat he had often used before in connection with Dick, yet he could always manage to get him on a string again almost any time.

It was only about a week from that time when he got into another scrape.

This time it was with the professor, or rather with some of his traps.

The old man happened to be out somewhere, and so Ebenezer began to nose around as usual to see what he could find out.

Now it so happened that the old man had been

working for two or three weeks upon some electrical experiment which was to startle the world, and as he had confided the secret of what he proposed doing to Eben, it aroused his curiosity, and the first chance he got he improved to see what he could learn.

"De professor am a great man," he mused, as he came across one thing after another that he did not understand.

Finally he touched something, and it set a little magnet at work, making a humming noise like that produced by a bumble bee.

"What dat?" he asked, starting back. "Golly, guess de ole man hab got a bumble bee's nest heah somewhere. Hark! Guess I betta look out fo' de sting."

The truth was that he accidentally set the vibrating electrodes of a powerful battery at work.

"Dat professor am a great man. Wonda what make it go. Wha' am it, anyway?"

In nosing around he took up a brass ball in each hand, to which was attached a wire, but the instant he did so he received the full force of a shock of electricity powerful enough to have paralyzed an ox, and the way he did dance and howl was a caution to snakes. But the fun of it was, he could not drop the balls to save his life.

Nor was this all, for the shock was so great that he could scarcely speak so as to be understood, and those in the kitchen who heard the noise of his big feet as he raised them around on the floor over their heads, came to the conclusion that the professor was throwing his trunks around for exercise.

"Oh-h-oh!" he groaned, between his chattering teeth, "de debil hab got me, fo' shuah—oh—oh! hold on! stop him—stop him!"

Dick heard the racket, and thought the old man was having a heifer-dance in his study.

Still Ebenezer groaned and danced.

Finally the professor returned.

"Hi—hi! what's the matter? what are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Oh—oh! take it off!" groaned Eben.

"Take what off?"

"De—de debil."

"Stop, I tell you."

"I can't stop."

"What are you doing? Put down those electrodes."

"Oh—oh—oh!"

Dick put in an appearance just then.

The professor himself was frustrated, and for a moment didn't know what to do. But in attempting to get the balls out of the poor devil's hands, he managed to get one of them in his own hand, and to get hold of Ebenezer with his other in such a way as to receive as much of the shock as Ebenezer was receiving, and being a much weaker man, it played the mischief with him.

And now the fun began again in dead earnest, for then they both danced, and howled all sorts of murder, greatly to Dick's delight.

"Go it!" he cried.

"Stop it!"

"Look at the double breakdown! Take care of your corns, unc."

By this time the professor and Ebenezer had got their legs and arms mixed, and down they went upon the floor, kicking, howling, and knocking things into wreck and confusion all around the room.

Still they could not let go of the balls, and so first one and then the other was on top as they kicked, rolled, and clawed around, while Dick stood by and encouraged his black-and-tan, Nip, to go in and get some fun out of it for himself.

It was a terrible rumpus, and before it ended every member of the household had reached the spot, and were viewing the strange, unaccountable rough-and-tumble that was transpiring on the floor.

Finally one of the wires broke, and the electricity ceased. But it took three or four minutes for them to get the kinks out of themselves, and to get upon their feet again.

"De Lord hab mussy!" groaned Eben.

"The devil take you!" said the professor.

"In the name of goodness, what does this all mean?" demanded Mrs. Plunket.

"They've started a circus, I guess," said Dick.

"Dear me, this house is in a continual uproar."

"Well, this black rascal began it."

"Began what?"

"He started my double back-acting shocker, and got caught."

"Shocker! I should say it was shocking."

"Fo' shuah, I didn't know nuffin'—"

"No, and you never will know anything; but if you don't keep out of my study, I'll contrive a machine that will tear you all to pieces."

"You must keep out of here, Ebenezer, and don't let me have to tell you again!"

"Don't be bit 'fraid dat I shall eber come in heah some mo'. I's all broke up!" moaned the darkey, limping away.

"And it serves you right for meddling with my things. Clear out!"

"I's a clarin', boss. I don't want no mo' ob anythin' yer got," and poor Ebenezer limped off, and sought the confines of his own chamber.

"Oh, dear—dear, I'm nearly murdered!" moaned the old professor, sinking into a chair.

The affair created some disgust, but a lot of fun also, especially among the servants.

But Dick made up his mind that he could have still more fun with the old professor's shocking machine, and so he carefully studied it up during the week; for if there was one thing more than another that he wanted, it was to try the effects of the electricity on the colored cook, Miss Assafidity Brown.

This dusky damsel had enjoyed no end of fun at Ebenezer's expense, and so Dick concluded to try what he could do for her. After perfecting his plans, he told Eben about it, and he was delighted.

"By golly, Dick, if you gibs her a rattlin', I fo'gibs yer fo' all dat you do to me."

"All right! Keep mum!"

"Fo' de Lord, dat'll be high fun; dat'll be too hot! Dat wench hab laugh 'nough at me!"

Dick managed the professor, and by the aid of some wire he connected the battery with the water pipe in such a way as to give a shock to any person who might touch it in any part of the house, although he intended it only for the cook and Joanna Gillhooley, the other servant.

When all was in readiness, he and Ebenezer went down into the kitchen to see how the old thing would work.

The cook was busy with her duties, but seeing Dick and Eben together, she suspected something, although she kept a rattling fire of jokes at Eben regarding his late misfortune with the professor.

"Had any mo' rastles wid de ole man?" said she.

"Wish it had been you instead of me; guess dat it would hab took de kinks out ob yer."

"Kinks! I got no kinks in me."

"Yes, yer hab, an' it would hab took de kinks right out ob yer wool."

"Go 'way, nigger."

"Begorra! but it didn't take mony of the kinks out of yer own wool, then," said Joanna.

Just then the cook went to the hydrant to draw some water, and receiving the shock from the battery up stairs, she uttered a yell and jumped back about two yards.

"What's the matter, Brown?" asked Dick.

"Got de jams, I guess," suggested Eben.

"Good Lord!" said the cook, looking at her hands. "What war dat?"

"That? Why, I thought it was a piece of 'Es-sence of Ole Virginia' you were doing," said Dick, laughing.

"Bress de Lord, how quar dat was!"

"Nonsense. What are you giving us?"

"Bress me if I know; but—" and cautiously she took hold of the stop-cock again, and again did she scream and jump back.

"Got 'em again!"

"Now dar am quarness 'bout dat yer," said the bewildered cook.

"Fut the divil is it, onyway?" asked Joanna; and she took hold of it. "Howly Mother!" she yelled, as she received the shock. "The divil is in it!"

"Fo' shuah, an' I'se gwine ter leave der house."

"Oh, what a nice racket you are giving us!"

"Try for yerself, Dick," said the Irish girl.

"Wouldn't you like to get me on a string? Oh, no; you can't do it."

"But I tell you there's divilment in it."

"The house is haunted, fo' shuah."

"Ya-ya-ya! What you drink?" asked Eben.

"Go 'way, dar, nigger, or I make a hole in you head wid dis yer saucepan!" she replied, savagely.

"Try it again, Brown," said Dick; and he urged her toward the sink.

"Marser Dick, if dis yer am some ob you fool-in', you better look out."

"Why so?"

"Cos I mash de head ob dat Crow."

"Oh, you're only fooling. Let's see what it is."

"Mind you don't fool wid me."

"What am I doing, I'd like to know?"

She grasped the handle once more, but again receiving the shock, she jumped back, and as quickly as she could recover herself, she went for Ebenezer, tooth and nail, knocking him down, and pouring a plate of soup over his head,

and rubbing it into his kinky wool, just as though he was to blame.

He yelled like a stuck pig.

"Come foolin' 'round heah, will yer!" she cried.

"Hold on! What did I do?" he called.

"Stop, Brown, stop! Hark! what's that?" asked Dick, going to the kitchen-door.

There was a yell in some of the rooms up stairs, and his sister was calling for help.

He rushed up stairs, followed by Joanna and the professor, and there found his mother in a great state of fright, and his sister looking as though she had a bad case of the nightmare.

The truth was that they had both received a shock while attempting to draw water into a wash-bowl, and were as much puzzled to account for it as were the two servants down stairs.

But the professor came forward with an explanation which quieted their fears, but gave Dick away so bad that he was in disgrace at once, and threatened with all sorts of dreadful punishments.

"Richard, I can stand your mischief no longer. I shall send you away to school at once," said his mother, excitedly.

"All right; but if I go, Ebenezer goes with me, and uncle is to blame for it all."

This created a riot between brother and sister, and he was given notice to go. But Dick understood the situation, and got out of the house to wait until the storm blew over, while Ebenezer Crow busied himself with washing the soup out of his wool, and trying to make friends again with the cook.

CHAPTER V.

THINGS went on finely at the Plunket mansion, and Ebenezer Crow was growing fat and sleek in his easy position of favorite servant, and had it not been for Dick and the old professor he would have outgrown his livery every month.

It was hard work for anyone to get very fat where Dick was, unless laughing made them grow so, and in that case of course they would have to be a partner in the fun, and not the victim of it, as Ebenezer was.

But he enjoyed the most of it, for being lazy by nature, he would stand considerable of Dick's fun rather than get mad, and this was why he grew fat, and looked sleek and happy all the time.

His fellow-servants, however, chaffed him unmercifully about his serving the tomatoes "undressed," and, as they told their friends about it, Ebenezer became quite famous in the neighborhood.

It was a long time, though, before he would venture into the study of Professor Dinglebus, for the experience he had there made him mighty shy, and so he kept away.

But the old lunatic had not entirely given up the idea of some time getting a medicine into him that would turn him white, and thus immortalize himself by the achievement; although, after the racket his first experiment created, he felt shaky about trying another, even if Eben would submit to take it all.

But Dick was the boy to get the best of him, for however severe a joke he might play on him one day, he would get over it and never tumble to anything he might attempt on him the next.

And Dick took it into his head one day to experiment on Eben himself, and see how near he could come to turning him into a white man.

Eben was very fond of lemonade and cooling drinks in warm weather, and so Dick told him if he would do a certain thing for him that he would give him some patent lemonade soda, nicer than he had ever tasted.

That settled it, for he would do almost anything for a treat of that kind, and Dick said he would stop at the store as he came from school and bring it home with him.

And so he did, and he brought his chum, Harry Youmans, along with him to see the fun; for if everything worked as he hoped, there would be fun, and lots of it.

"Did you do what I told you to do?" asked Dick on his return.

"Guess I did, Dicky. But whar am dat yer patent soda!" asked Ebenezer.

"Oh, I have got that all right. I always do just as I say I will. Come down into the kitchen and I'll fix it for you," said Dick, leading the way.

"Oh, by golly—oh, by golly!" said the darkey, rubbing his belly and rolling up his eyes. "Am it yum—yum?"

"Of course it is. Come along."

On arriving in the kitchen, Dick took two goblets and filled them both nearly full of water.

after which he placed the contents of one seidlitz powder in one and one in the other; that is, he put the contents of the blue paper in one goblet and that of the white paper in the other.

Ebenezer was watching with much interest.

"Makin' one fo' me an' one fo' you?" he asked.

"No; I'm going to give them both to you. No sort of lemonade agrees with me."

"Oh, by golly! how am dat for high?"

"Here." And he handed him the goblet into which he had stirred the contents of the white paper.

Ebenezer lost no time in swallowing it.

"Am dat what yer call de patunt soda?" he asked, at the same time frowning as though he didn't think much of it, anyhow.

"Yes; but I guess I didn't get enough of the powder into that; there is more in this. Here, drink it quick, for here comes the cook."

Ebenezer Crow didn't want any greater incentive, even if he had cared nothing for the treat, for he and the cook, although of the same color, were far from being anything like good friends.

Catching up the goblet, he drank its contents without stopping.

The next instant he gave a sudden start, and began to look wild.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick.

"Wha' dat?"

"What?"

"In heah," and he groaned deeply. "I's all on fire!"

"On fire? No, you're not. Where is it?"

"Down heah in my stomick. Wha' was dat you gib me, Dick?"

"Patent soda. Why?"

"I's bilin'!"

"Nonsense!"

"I's all swellin' up."

"Puttin' on airs, I guess," sneered the cook.

"Oh, Lor', I's gwine fo' to die! I know I is. Send fo' de doctor, quick!"

"Go for him yourself."

"I can't; I's bilin' inside, oh, Lor'!" and by this time the two seidlitz powders had got to work, and in less than half a minute from the time he swallowed the last gobletful, it began to effervesce and to rise, swell up, and raise Cain generally.

In fact, about the first thing they saw was a lot of bubbles coming from his mouth and nose, and in all probability they never saw a darkey so frightened, and survive it, as he was.

He threw himself down on the floor and rolled around, groaning loudly, all the while swelling up like a toad-fish.

"Oh, lor! I's dyin'—dyin' fo' shuah."

Dick and his chum were laughing ready to split themselves, while the cook was so greatly alarmed that she ran screaming up stairs after Mrs. Plunket.

Being informed that Ebenezer was indulging in a fit of some kind down stairs, Mrs. Plunket ran hurriedly to the kitchen, where she found him rolling and groaning upon the floor.

"Mercy on me, what is the matter?" she asked.

"Eb's got the jim-jams," said Dick, laughing.

"It's de hydramphoba fo' suah," said the cook.

"Go for the doctor at once, Richard."

"Oh, he'll get over it all right."

"What has he been doing?"

"Been taking some more of the professor's medicine, I guess," said Dick, and again he laughed.

"You heartless fellow! Go for the doctor at once!" said his mother.

"Go fo' a preacher at de same time," groaned Eben.

"Yes—yes, hurry up!" added the cook.

"Can't somebody sing, or do something 'ligious?" he asked, sitting up on the floor, and holding himself as though to prevent bursting.

"I'll pass around the contribution box if that'll make you feel any better," said Dick, while the cook, in her fright, began to sing: "Roll, Jordan, Roll."

"Why don't you go, Richard Plunket?"

"Because there's no danger, mammy."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, Dicky! I'se gwine fo' ter die, but I forgives yer fo' what yer did."

"What have you been doing, sir?" demanded his mother, sharply.

"Nothing, only gave him a seidlitz powder, and he let it mix in his stomach."

"Richard Plunket, you are the pest of this house. Get up, Ebenezer. There is no danger. Stop that singing," she added, turning to the cook.

"Oh, I'se bilin' an' bustin'!"

"It is nothing but a seidlitz powder. Get up!"

There is no danger. It is only one of Dick's tricks."

Ebenezer glared wildly from one to another.

"Get up, old man; you've only got a little gas in your stomach, that's all," said Dick.

"Little! It am a whole gas house, shuah. Hold me or I shall go up like a balloon."

"Better get up like a man," said his mistress.

"Oh, I'm bustin'!" said he, and just then a tremendous gulp of gas and wind escaped him, which, of course, afforded him relief.

"Richard, I'll settle with you for this."

"You don't owe me anything, mammy."

"He gib me some patunt lemonade."

"And haven't you had experience enough with him in all this time to know better than to have anything to do with him? I am surprised."

"So be I, missus."

"Yes, you looked surprised. Now get up and see if you can keep your senses about you," said Mrs. Plunket, going from the room.

"Won't it kill me?"

"No, it'll only make you fat."

"Oh, lord! Dick, you is a bad boy."

"No, I'm not. You wanted some of the patent lemonade and I gave it to you."

"Somebody orter take you ober dar knee an' smooove you down wid a slipper," said the cook.

"Why don't you do it?"

"I would like ter, honey, an' don't you forget it, nuver. An' dat big lubber, he oughter be kick in de head wid a mule," she added, glaring at Ebenezer.

By this time the effect of the seidlitz powder had nearly passed away, and Ebenezer began to look less frightened, although his big eyes still stuck out far enough to hang your hat on.

"No mo' patunt lemonade fo' me," said he.

"Why, it's wholesome."

"De run't anyfin' der matter wid my wholesome, honey," said he.

"All ob yer clar out ob dis kitchen. Comin' down heah an' foolin' around an' keepin' me from my wuk. Clar out!" said the cook.

They knew when she was in earnest that there was no use of fooling with her, for she was to all intents and purposes the queen of the kitchen, and so they all "dusted out."

Ebenezer didn't fairly come to himself or get down to his regular size that day. But the joke became known all around the neighborhood, and he didn't hear the last of that patent lemonade for many months; and it was some time before he would speak to Dick or give him a ghost of a show to play another racket.

Speaking of ghosts, that reminds me of another little "quilting bee" that Dick put him through only a short time afterwards.

Dick was a trifle stage-struck, just as a great many boys are, and if he hadn't had so much devilry in his nature he would have made a first-rate actor.

And Ebenezer Crow had 'em, too; that is to say, he often went to theaters and places of amusement, and he also concluded that he could become an actor. This idea Dick took particular pains to encourage, telling him about Aldrich, the colored tragedian, who is regarded, both in this country and England, as one of the best actors on the stage.

This tickled Eben wonderfully, especially as he assured him that he could undoubtedly become as good an actor as Aldrich was.

And he taught him how to "spout" and read Shakespeare, and the result was that Ebenezer had 'em bad, and was continually spouting.

Finally a brilliant idea entered Dick's head.

There was to be an entertainment of a mixed order given in the church for the benefit of the poor, and he resolved to take part in it, assisted by Ebenezer.

After thinking the matter over for several days, he concluded to do the ghost scene from "Hamlet," he playing the part of *Hamlet*, and Ebenezer taking the part of his father's ghost.

The idea tickled the darkey immensely, and he was anxious to begin at once.

And so they learned their lines and rehearsed the scene several times, and if ever there was a comical ghost, Ebenezer Crow was.

He weighed about two hundred pounds, and contrasting him with Dick, with whom he was to play, made him look all the more ridiculous.

But Dick thought he knew what he was about, and took him to see Booth play the part, so that he could get an idea of how the old thing worked.

Finally the time drew near for the entertainment to take place, and Dick went to a costumer and hired a *Hamlet* dress for himself, and a suit

of the largest armor he could find in which to dress Ebenezer.

On the afternoon before the evening's performance they dressed themselves for a final rehearsal. Dick had no trouble in getting into his dress, but it took a long time to buckle that armor upon the fat darkey. In fact, he had to be squeezed into it by Dick and his friends, who were present to see the dress rehearsal, and once in it, he could scarcely breathe or move.

"That's all right," said Dick.

"He looks just like an old warrior," said the others.

"By golly! I—I feels like a warrior," said he, trying to draw a full breath.

"Now, then, for business. You stand right there just as I told you before, and when you get the cue you come striding on, and stand perfectly still."

"Golly, I guess dat will be easy 'nough."

The boys exchanged winks.

"Now, then, here is your cue. 'Look where it comes!'"

Ebenezer had been drilled until he understood the business as well as the words, but when he attempted to walk on, he seemed like almost anything else but a ghost. He walked more like a pair of tongs. The boys could hardly keep from laughing, but Dick began his speech, commencing with: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" and went through with it very creditably indeed.

And then when Ebenezer attempted to beckon him to follow, his armor rattled and clanked, and squeaked in the joints. It was anything but ghostly.

However, he managed to get off the imaginary stage, followed by "Hamlet," and to get on again after a fashion, after which he spoke his lines with a strong darkey dialect.

The scene finished, they all congratulated Eben, and prophesied that he would make the hit of the evening, all of which tickled his vanity greatly.

They had only finished when the door-bell rang, and as it was Ebenezer's duty to answer it on all occasions, he was a trifle frustrated.

"Go down, just as you are," said Dick.

"Of course," said the others.

"Yes, and see what they will say."

"Shall I?"

"Of course. Go ahead."

He started to go down stairs, but the armor was so stiff in the joints that he could not work it, and when about half way down he fell and went tumbling and rattling like an old stove clear to the bottom, making a terrible racket and alarming the whole house.

It is a wonder that he hadn't broke his neck, and possibly he would have done so had not the iron armor protected him.

But once down he could not get up, and there he lay, groaning and calling for help, while Dick and his friends were nearly splitting themselves laughing, as they rushed down stairs to his assistance.

Mrs. Plunket and her daughter came from the parlor, half frightened out of their wits, and when they saw the figure in armor lying in the hallway, they were more scared than ever.

"Mercy on me! what's this? Here, Richard, Ebenezer, come here quick!" called Mrs. Plunket.

"It's heah, Missus Plunket," moaned Ebenezer, not able to move.

"What is that, Richard—what does that mean?"

"That's a ghost, mammy," said Dick.

"Ghost! I should say so. What is it doing there?"

"Got cast, I guess."

"Help me up, Dicky," moaned Eben.

"Why, it is Ebenezer."

"Yes. He's going to play the *Ghost* for me to-night, and we've had a dress rehearsal."

"Indeed. Is that a part of the performance to tumble down stairs and lie on the hall floor?"

"No; he started to answer the bell in his armor and fell; took a war-like tumble, so to speak."

"Help me up. It's all broke ter pieces."

"Can't you get up yourself?"

"No, I can't move."

"Come on, fellows, let's boost him up," said Dick, catching him by one arm.

They all tried, but were not half strong enough to get him half way up, and it wasn't until the chambermaid and cook were summoned that he was got upon his feet once more.

"Now you go to your room and take that horrid dress off, and don't let me see you cutting such a figure as this again," said Mrs. Plunket.

"Yes'm."

"And you, Richard, see that you behave yourself."

"Yes'm."

"If you got him into this business, you get him out of it at once."

"Yes'm. But you're going to the show to-night, aren't you?"

"What do you mean by calling our entertainment given in the church, a show?"

"That's what everybody calls 'em."

"Low people may do so. Our kind do not. Now go up and assist Ebenezer in getting out of that harness."

They assisted him up to Dick's chamber, where he tried to sit down in a chair, but the armor was so stiff that he could not do so, and while he had it on, he could only stand up or lie down.

But when they came to try to get him out of the armor, they found that it was impossible to do so, for his body had swollen so that it forced out the plates, making it impossible to unclasp any portion of the whole arrangement.

"Golly! guess I'll have ter keep it on," said he.

"Guess you will. Well, never mind about it now, for it is almost time to go to the show, and after it is over the armor will come off easier."

"How dat?"

"Because your swelling will have gone down. But you mustn't eat anything while you have it on."

"Oh, lord!"

"Because if you do we can never get it off."

Ebenezer felt foolish and sick, but Dick and his friends encouraged him to keep it on, and on account of it he excused him to his mother at supper time, while Eben remained melancholy and alone up stairs, more like a ghost than ever before.

"Golly, guess dat I shall hab ter make a ghost ob myself afore I get out ob dis yer harness. But I'se gwine ter be a great actor man like Booth," he added, as a self-applied salve for his misfortune.

Meantime the professor had been lecturing his sister regarding Dick and his mischief, arguing that he had some sort of a disease, and that he ought to be put through a severe and thorough course of medicine in order to physic it out of him.

But finally the time came for them to go to the church where the entertainment was to be given, and taking Ebenezer into a carriage, they were driven away, followed by a crowd of curious, yelling boys, who had got a glimpse of him as he came stiffly down the doorsteps.

The church was crowded with the friends of the performers, and expectation was on tiptoe.

Ebenezer was smuggled in at the back door, and stood patiently behind the curtain that had been rigged up in imitation of a stage, while Dick went around among his friends, talking up the business of the evening.

Finally, the Sabbath-school superintendent, who acted as stage manager and lecturer, came out with this announcement:

"We shall next have a scene from 'Hamlet,' the part of *Hamlet* being taken by Master Richard Plunket, and the *Ghost* by Ebenezer Crow."

A ringing round of applause greeted this, for Dick was a general favorite, and his friends were anxious to see what he would do with such a big part.

As the superintendent retired, Dick made his appearance. He was finely dressed for the character, and again was he applauded. Scarcely bowing in response, he gave Ebenezer his cue to come on, and that individual started to obey.

But by this time he had become so stiff that he could scarcely walk, and being excited, he got his legs tangled and mixed up in some way, and tumbled down on the stage with a terrible bang.

A wild shout of laughter followed, for the part was so well known that everybody saw what the trouble was, and the tragedy was instantly changed into a farce.

Dick saw it, and knowing that the whole thing was spoiled, he instantly resolved to carry it still further; and so taking a seat upon the prostrate body of the *Ghost*, he began: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" and then everybody roared louder than before. It was, indeed, the hit of the evening, but it was made in quite a different way from what he had intended.

After enjoying the fun for quite a while, the superintendent went on, and together he and Dick pulled that ghost off by the heels, amid roars of laughter and applause, after which an explanation and apology was made. But the audience were satisfied, and seemed to think they had got their money's worth.

Mrs. Plunket was greatly annoyed, but she couldn't help laughing, to save her life.

But poor Ebenezer! His heart was broken, and as quick as he could get stood up on end

once more, he started to return home; for besides feeling bad over his mishap, his armor was becoming very uncomfortable, and he wanted to get out of it.

But there was where the trouble commenced; for after reaching home, it was found to be wholly impossible to unfasten the clasps which help it together.

"Oh, we shall have to starve you out," said Dick, laughing.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Ebenezer, "somefin am a happenin' ter dis chile."

"Never mind; can't nothing happen to you now. You are proof against mosquito bites."

"But how am I ter get out ob dis yer?"

"Well, I suppose we can bleed you enough to git you out, that is, if you don't up and die afterwards."

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned.

In truth, they really did have to send for a blacksmith, with a hammer and cold chisel, to cut the fastenings of the armor before the poor devil could get released, and then he nearly burst his clothes, by swelling out so suddenly into his original shape.

"How do you feel now?" asked Dick.

"So sick. No mo' acterin' fo' me. I's got my belly full," said he, sadly.

"Well, you were the worst old ghost!"

"All right. I s'pose you put up dat job on me; but I don't want no mo' actin'."

"And I guess other folks don't—any more of that sort."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the warm weather came, Mrs. Plunket made preparations for going to the sea shore, and of course Ebenezer Crow had to go along as the coachman and general servant.

Of course, also, Dick Plunket and his sister, Rose, went along, and in due time they were nicely situated in one of the cottages at Long Branch, where Mrs. Plunket calculated on cutting a big swell, and finding a rich husband for her daughter.

As for the mischievous Dick, he calculated on having a good time generally, and continuing to work Ebenezer for all he was worth.

The old professor was left at home to keep the house and servants all right, or rather servant, for the cook went along with the family, and the other servant, Joanna, was to act as housekeeper. But the professor scorned such frivolity as going to the country. He could not afford to lose so much time, for he had the world to astonish yet with some wonderful invention or stupendous discovery.

Although we have been right in the family ever since we started with Ebenezer Crow, we have as yet hardly made the acquaintance of Miss Rose Plunket, Dick's only sister, but we may as well know her now, as she will probably figure a few in this chapter.

She was about eighteen years of age; very handsome and very romantic; had been "out" in society two years, and wasn't half so smart as either her mother or her brother. But having a rich, indulgent parent, she was looked upon with considerable favor by the beaux, and was a passably clever member of fashionable society; as good as any of them, perhaps, which isn't saying much.

Mrs. Plunket wanted her to marry a wealthy man, and this was one of her objects in taking a cottage down at Long Branch; but Rose was already in love with a poor counter-jumper who worked at Stewart's, and had been allowing him to court her on the sly for a year or more, not daring to tell her mother, or to elope and get married as he wished her to.

But now she was going away, to be gone three months, at least, and they could only correspond during the time. He was mad enough to turn himself wrong side out because she would not elope with him; for once married to her, he felt sure that he could live without work forever afterwards.

Now it so happened that there was a very swell chap who had lately arrived in New York from somewhere, by the name of Nuggets, who had "struck it rich" in Australia, and having his "pile," he was dubbed "Duke de Nugget," and was traveling for fun and adventure.

Mrs. Plunket heard and read about him, and resolved to have him visit her cottage when he came to Long Branch, as he of course would do, for it was a weakness of hers to get all the distinguished people she could for guests.

So she wrote to a friend in New York, who had a good chance to make the "duke's" acquaintance, and asked him to arrange with him to pay a visit to the Plunket cottage, when at the

Branch; but she said nothing about it to the members of her family, fearing that she might not succeed.

Now it came to pass that the counter jumper, who was trying to catch Rose, had a brilliant idea enter his head, right where he parted his hair in the middle. He knew, of course, that Mrs. Plunket would have heard about the Duke de Nugget, and that such a wealthy and titled person would be sure to be more than welcome at her cottage; and if he could fix it with Rose, he might assume to be the duke, and in that guise have a chance to be near his idol, and perhaps induce her to marry him.

So he wrote to her, telling her that he was about to visit her under an assumed name, being no less than that of the Duke de Nugget, which would, at least, give them an opportunity of being in each others company for a few days.

The idea pleased the romantic Rose, for with all of her romance she had some of that mischief in her nature which distinguished her brother Dick. And so she wrote to him and gave him the names of one or two of the family friends who would be handy to know in the business.

So counter jumper Adolphus Skivins forged a letter of introduction from one of these acquaintances, and getting together all the money he could, he bought a new suit of clothes, got himself up very "swell," and started for Long Branch, never suspecting that the real Nuggets would ever get within ten miles of there.

In the meantime Mrs. Plunket had received a letter from her friend in New York, informing her that he had given the "duke" a letter of introduction to her, and that she might expect a call from him soon, as he was on the point of visiting Long Branch, and it tickled her almost out of her corsets.

That evening at dinner, in the presence of her family and several distinguished visitors, she made the announcement in this way. Speaking to the Hon. Darius Dump, she said:

"Of course you have heard of this celebrated person at present in New York?"

"Yaas, I b'lieve so," drawled Dump.

"I refer to the Duke de Nugget."

"Oh, yaas."

Rose almost leaped from her chair; after which she proceed to blush all over the visible portions of her body, but she said nothing just then.

"Yaas, b'lieve I have read something 'bout him in the papers. Bought his title, I suppose," said Dump.

"I don't know, I am sure; but I read in the *Tribune* that he inherited the title, but would never assume it until he became possessed of money enough to support it as his ancestors had done before him."

"Yaas."

It was evident that the Honorable Dump didn't take much stock in anybody who might eclipse him in the social world.

"Wouldn't it be delightful, ma, to have him pay us a visit?" Rose ventured to ask.

"Wouldn't it?" exclaimed Dick. "A real, live juke; one of those fellows we see on the stage with long stockings and feathers. Oh, wouldn't I like to see his royal nibs!"

"Richard," said his mother, reprovingly, "how many times have I told you about using so much slang? Little boys should be seen, not heard."

"Well, I'm a Fourth of July boy."

"Please say no more on the subject."

"Yaas, very fine, I dare say," said Dump, and then he manifested a disposition to change the subject.

"Well, you may not be surprised if he pays us a visit soon."

"Indeed?"

Rose went into blushes again.

"Yes; many of our friends will naturally get acquainted with him, and possibly invite him to call on us, if he visits the Branch."

She was bound not to tell the thing just as it was, for fear her friends would suspect that she had been intriguing to get the "duke" for a guest, and so the conversation gradually turned.

"Oh, won't ma be surprised!" thought Rose.

"I say, Dicky; what war dat you mudder war spokin' 'bout at de table? What am a juke?" asked Ebenezer Crow, who had been waiting on the table, and naturally overheard the conversation.

"A juke is one of those stage roosters in tights, like Lydia Thompson," replied Dick.

"Do he go 'round dat way?"

"Of course he does."

"An' amn't he 'shamed ob hisself?"

"No; they're used to it."

"Golly!"

"Why, it's no worse than you were, when you served the tomatoes 'undressed.' Remember?"

"Dicky, I don't want yer fer ter tole me anyfin 'bout dat scrape. Dat war your fault, an' it nigh unter ruin my character."

Dick laughed heartily at the memory of the affair, and finally went away, leaving Ebenezer to his duties and reflections on the subject. It was true; the joke would never leave him, and nearly every day it was thrown up to him in some shape or other, and on each occasion he would secretly resolve to murder Dick for fooling him into it.

The next morning Mrs. Plunket told him to take the carriage to the depot, and see if anybody came and inquired for her. In fact, she had made up her mind to have her coach there on the arrival of every train so as to be sure to catch the duke.

Rose got a chance to whisper to him just before he started away.

"You are going to the depot for the Duke de Nugget?"

"Yes, Miss Rose, I's g'wine fo' ter fotch der Juke de Nuggum," replied Ebenezer.

"De Nugget, not Nuggum. See that you don't make any mistake. Now, I'll tell you what sort of a person he is," said she, glancing cautiously around.

"Hab you seen him?"

"I—I—well, I've seen his picture."

"In tights?"

"In what?"

"Tights, like Lyddy Thompson."

"Nonsense!"

"Dicky say so."

"Don't you mind what that mad joker says. He dresses just like other people. He is tall and slim, with an elegant black mustache; parts his hair in the middle; has red cheeks and lovely eyes. Now do you think you will know him?"

"I guess so."

"Don't say a word, only wait until you hear him ask for the Plunket Cottage, and then you can take him directly here. Understand?"

In two hours from that time Adolphus Skivins was landed at the Plunket Cottage.

Presenting his forged letters of introduction, Mrs. Plunket was all smiles and graciousness, making things so downy for him that he at once took heart, winked on the sly to Rose, to whom he had not yet been introduced, and concluded that he had fallen into a soft thing.

Then she introduced him to Rose, and they shook and squeezed each others hands while telling how delighted they were at making each others acquaintance.

Mrs. Plunket attempted to monopolize the conversation, but she soon saw she was the third wheel and prudently withdrew, thinking what a nice fellow he was, and that he was evidently smitten with her daughter, which might result in her being made a duchess. It made her swell up almost to bursting.

At lunch the duke was introduced to Dick.

"Juke, I'm glad to see you," said he. "First one I ever saw."

"Indeed!" said Skivins, coloring somewhat.

"Yes, but I know a chap that jerks drygoods at Stewart's, who looks just like you."

"Richard, I am surprised at your rudeness," said his mother, sharply, while both Rose and Skivins got red enough to make rooster's combs of.

"I meant no offense. I only thought how much alike they looked, that's all. I beg pardon, Nuggy."

"Richard, I am positively ashamed of you."

"He's horrid, ma," said Rose.

"Oh, I don't mind him," said Skivins, trying to smile and look calm.

"He is a very rude boy."

"Well, you see I ain't used to jukes."

"One would think that you were not used to good society of any kind."

"Can't help it. Nobility always did upset me."

"I'd like to upset you," thought Skivins, doubling up his fist involuntarily.

After lunch mother and daughter took him out to ride in the family carriage, and the counter-jumper was never so happy before in his life.

"Halloo, Skivins!" said a young fellow who passed them as they rode along, and again did Skivins blush.

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Plunket, while Rose felt like going through chancery.

"I—I didn't understand. But I think people are very rude in this country," said he, bracing up.

"Yes, many of them are," replied Mrs. P. "But I trust your lordship will not judge us all

by the few who may be rude. We have good society."

"I am well aware of that," replied Skivins; and he was well aware who it was had hailed him, it being a fellow-clerk who was off enjoying his vacation.

Well, they drove around for some time, showing off the Duke de Nugget; although Ebenezer Crow, who was driving, attracted quite as much, if not more attention than did the occupants of the carriage; after which they returned to dress for dinner.

Thus far Skivins had acted his part very well, and Mrs. Plunket felt as big as a setting hen; but on their return they found two gentlemen waiting for them—one of whom was a friend of the family; and after the first greeting was over, he introduced his companion as the Duke de Nugget, of whom she had doubtless heard.

"The Duke de Nugget!" exclaimed Mrs. Plunket.

"By golly, dar am anodder juke!" thought Ebenezer.

"Certainly; why?" asked her friend, as the real Nugget arose and bowed.

He was quite a different-looking man from the one she had in the cottage then, and who was at that moment talking on the piazza with Rose, even laughing at the success of their little game.

"Why, indeed! Because I have one Duke de Nugget here already," said she.

"What?"

"It is true."

"That cannot be, madame, for I am the only person in the world bearing that title," said Nugget.

"And I will vouch for him, Mrs. Plunket," said her friend. "Where is this person? I am sure he is an impostor."

"Come this way," said she, leading the way out upon the piazza.

"Halloo, Skivins, you here?" asked Mrs. Plunket's friend, instantly recognizing the fraud.

Skivins seemed to be looking for a knot-hole to take a drop through.

"Skivins—Skivins! why, that's the name he was called on the road a few minutes ago. But this is the person who claims to be the Duke de Nugget."

"What! He—he—well, that's good, upon my word. Why, he's a clerk at Stewart's."

"What have you to say, sir?" demanded Mrs. P.

"N-n-nothing; I—"

"Bounce him!" shouted Dick, who had overheard all.

"Ebenezer!" called Mrs. P.

"Yas, m'm," said Eb, putting in an appearance.

As for Rose, she seemed paralyzed.

"Show this person from the place," said she, pointing to poor Skivins.

"Yas, m'm."

"I'll help you, Eben," said Dick.

"I—I'll go myself," said Skivins, starting.

"Run him!" shouted Eben, catching him by the coat-collar and the seat of his pants.

"Don't—don't!" protested Rose.

"Sic him, Nip!" shouted Dick, setting his black-and-tan upon him.

Nip grabbed him by one leg as though to assist Ebenezer, and the way they did rush him down that gravel walk, and out into the road, was a caution to tramps.

The others laughed heartily over the affair, or all but Rose, who retired to hide her confusion and shame.

"Better clar out now. We don't want ne jukes 'round heah. We lose a whole wash one night by some ob yer jukes," said Ebenezer.

"You all go to the devil," snarled Skivins, as he picked himself up out of the dirt.

"Can't do dat, cos we've cast de debil out."

"Oh, I'll get even with you for this."

"Gwine fo' ter pay yer bode, an' fo' dat ride?"

"Go to blazes!" said he, starting off.

"Neber mind, I ken make it hot enough fo' you widout dat. Come heah, Nip, juke-meat amn't good," said he, calling off the dog who still worried him.

That settled Skivins. He never attempted to tell his love again, but let concealment, like a full grown potato-bug, feed upon the damask of his cheek.

"Eb, you're a first-class bouncer," said Dick, shaking his hand.

"Been wantin' some exercise like dat fo' some time. My muscle's kinder gettin' down," said Ebenezer.

And Rose kept her secret, although she felt very much put out by the occurrence, and so the nicest part of the joke did not come out.

But they found the real duke a very pleasant

and entertaining man, and wondered how they could have been so deceived by an impostor.

Dick, however, knew that he had seen him at Stewart's, and took no stock in him from the start, and he could only thank fortune that the affair was not carried into the courts, as it most certainly would have been had it not been for the scandal attending it.

About a month after this affair, a coach brought to the cottage an old rooster by the name of Burster, a church deacon, and as big a hypocrite as any of them, perhaps.

He was acquainted with Mrs. Plunket and her family, having met them on several occasions, and being a widower, and knowing how wealthy she was, he made up his mind to catch her; and it was this tender business that brought him to Long Branch and then to the Plunket cottage.

She gave him a generous welcome, but to tell the truth, she would have been glad if he had not come, for to say nothing of the fact of his being an undertaker, he was not such a guest as she wanted to make one of her gay circle of friends.

Of course she mistrusted what he was after, and resolved to keep him as far from it as possible, and Dick also suspected the truth. If he had liked him ever so well, this would have turned him against him effectually, for he had no notion of indulging in a stepfather, no matter who he might be. He had too soft a thing of it to allow that.

He remained at the house all day, and was made welcome, as were all beneath that roof, although no one supposed that he had the cheek to remain until very late in the evening.

But he did have it, and evidently hoped that he would get a chance to see the fascinating widow alone and start a little courting business. Twelve o'clock came and yet he remained glued to his chair.

Mrs. Plunket was too much of a lady to tell him that he had already overstayed his welcome, but when the guests had nearly all retired, she wished him good night and turned him over to Dick and Ebenezer, who were to show him to the only spare room in the cottage.

This was evidently a blow that he was unprepared for, and he stammered something about wishing to see her alone for a few minutes.

"I dare say we shall see you in the morning," said she, pretending not to hear what he said, and then she went to her chamber.

"Oh, we'll take care of his nibs," said Dick.

The deacon glanced inquiringly at him, but he turned him over to Ebenezer with a wave of his hand, and that dark-complexioned worthy took a bed lamp and made ready to escort him.

"Deacon Buster, follow me to de sky parlor an' I will show you to your bed ob roses."

The old man followed without a word.

But Dick had already planted several thorns in that bed of roses, in the shape of about a pint of sandburs, a little teaser sharp and ugly enough to worry the life out of a mule, and which is peculiar to New Jersey. These he scattered between the sheets and around on the floor, and when the amorous old undertaker got undressed and began paddling around on the floor in his bare feet, he resembled a Hottentot going through a lightning-drill war dance.

He had blown the light out by this time, and if he had not done so, he could not have seen the little tormentors on the carpet, and thinking to escape them he got into bed on the double quick.

But here his trouble began again, and in less than two minutes he was bobbing and rolling about like a man with a bad case of the itch, and finally, bellowing like a calf, he leaped out of the bed and got up into a chair. What the mischief it all meant he couldn't for the life of him tell, and not having any match wherewith to strike a light, he concluded to sit perched up on the chair and spend the remainder of the night scratching.

He was too pious to say cuss words, but he thought enough of them to have stocked a first-class pirate crew with a brand-new stock in trade. Finally, however, he fell asleep, and gradually forgot his misery, only to tumble off in a short time, jarring the whole house, and getting down on the carpet again into more of the pesky sandburs.

It was indeed a little hell for the old baau, but he finally rolled under the bed where Dick had not scattered them, and there in the course of an hour he fell asleep, only, however, to dream of pins, needles, and of everything, in fact, that could cut, prick, or torment.

Morning came and he was an early riser, you bet, and a slight examination showed him the cause of all his woes, and he instantly jumped to

the right conclusion, that it was a trick played by that mischievous half-orphan, Dick Plunket.

His first impulse was to skip out and return to his hotel; but on second thought he concluded that a faint heart never won a rich widow, and he then resolved to remain and win the beautiful Mrs. Plunket, just to get the fatherly control of her mischievous son.

He appeared at breakfast (after taking a long walk) all smiles, although Dick knew by the evidence of his ears that he had passed anything but an agreeable night; and as before, all eyes for Mrs. Plunket. She treated him civilly, and that was all; and Dick could see how distasteful it was for her to do even that, and he resolved to put her out of her misery.

"Ebenezer, how is your muscle this morning?" he asked, after breakfast, and while they were all out on the lawn but the servants.

"Waal, Dicky, my bone an' shinew feel putty plucky dis mornin'." Why so?" said Eben.

"I have got a job for you."

"Am dat so? In what purticular?"

"A job of bouncer."

"Who am it? de ole deacum?"

"The same."

"Am dat a go, Dicky?"

"It am. He's a bloody ole bore, and mammy wants to get rid of him. Go for him on the one, two, three—"

"Bounce! I'm yer honeysuckle, chile. Oh, jus' watch me—jus' watch me!" said he, starting for the lawn where a party were playing croquet.

Marching up to the deacon, he seized him by the coat-collar and the seat of his baggy pantaloons, and pointing him towards the road, he cried:

"Deacon Buster, de Philistines hab got yer. One, two, three—bounce!" and starting on a run, he did not allow him to stop until he had him out into the street. "Deacon, don't come 'round heah any mo'," were his last words; and the deacon heeded them, and got back to his hotel, and finally back to the city.

CHAPTER VII.

THE grand bounce of Deacon Buster at the hands of Ebenezer Crow, effectually cured him of his love for the Widow Plunket, and Long Branch was no place for him after that.

He would doubtless have commenced a suit against the stalwart darkey for assault had he not been afraid that the whole thing would get out, and so he pocketed his discomfiture and returned to New York, a sadder but a wiser man.

Mrs. Plunket was not sorry for the result, although she did not exactly approve of the means that Dick had adopted to get rid of a troublesome visitor; and as all of her guests laughed and enjoyed the thing, she at length concluded to do so too.

From that time Dick gave him the name of Ebenezer Bouncer, and it rather tickled him.

"Fo' de Lor! Dickey, I would like a job like dat yer ebry day. Gibbs a chap an appetite," said he.

"Yes, and gives the other chap an appetite, too," replied Dick.

"Guess you am wrong dar. It kick de appetite right out ob 'im. Leastwise, I guess de ole deacon hab lost his appetite fo' widders."

"Oh, you pleased mammy muchly, and you can make yourself solid with her in that way."

"Dat kind ob wo'k pleases me, honey," said Eben, strutting up and down the walk with his thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"Now, I'll tell you something, Eben," said Dick, taking him gently aside.

"What am it, Dickey?"

"Mum, now, for this is a family secret."

"Hope fo' ter be all ground ter powder if I eber say a wo'd ter anybody."

"Remember, now."

"Fo' ter be shuah."

"Don't hint it to mammy."

"Neber."

"Nor Rose."

"No."

"Nor anybody."

Ebenezer held up his right hand and looked pious.

"Well, there's three or four roosters like the old deacon sneaking around after mammy, just because she's got 'sugar.' Understand?"

"Oh, co'se I do. But I'm de chile dat can choke 'em off."

"That's so. But of course mammy is too polite to sanction any such a thing, but, bet your life, she'll be tickled way down to her toe-nails."

"I'm your kitydid."

"All right. You lay low. There'll be another

of them here before long. I'll let you know," said the mischievous Dick.

"Good 'nough," he replied, and with this they separated, and Eben soon after drove Mrs. Plunket and some of her friends out for a ride, leaving Dick to concoct the joke he had in his mind.

At the first favorable opportunity she told Ebenezer that she did not approve of his manner of running objectionable people from the cottage, but she said so in such a way that he didn't regard it as anything like a reproof for what he had done.

Now, that young rascal, Dick Plunket, could no more exist for twenty-four hours without having some mischief on hand than he could fly, and Ebenezer Crow was pretty sure to be the victim, either directly or indirectly.

The manner in which Eben had "fired" the old deacon out pleased him exceedingly, and now he was plotting to get him at somebody else; and, as luck would have it, that very day he heard his mother say that the Reverend Mr. Dingle thought of coming to spend a few days with them.

Mr. Dingle, it must be understood, was the fashionable pastor of the fashionable church to which Mrs. Plunket belonged. Not that she cared much, if anything, for churches, but it was fashionable, so she and her daughter belonged to this one.

And the next day, sure enough, he came. His wife was in Europe with a party of friends, and so he came all alone and received a hearty welcome.

But as he was a clergyman, of course there was less hilarity about the house than there would have been had he been of any other calling.

This fact, however, did not escape Ebenezer, and he at once took it for granted that Mr. Dingle had come to court his mistress.

He encountered Dick soon after he had returned from the depot with the parson.

"I say, Dicky, am dat white-choker chap one ob dem roosters what we talk about?"

"Hush!" said Dick, leading him aside. "Don't say a word."

"No."

"He's one of them!"

"Dat's what I funk."

"Hush!"

"Yas."

"He must be bounced."

"I go fo' him."

"Wait—wait until I tell you. It must be done nicely. Nothing rough, you know."

"Jus' as you say, Dicky. But, oh! only luf me at him! Luf me take der kinks out ob myself wid him! I show him how ter come 'round heah making lub ter you mudder."

"That's all right. We'll go down bathing with him early in the morning, only we won't let him know we are going."

"Dat's so?" said Eben, joyously.

"I heard him say that he was going."

"Oh, see me!"

Well, the thing was all understood, and Eben felt as happy as a clam.

He waited on the table that evening at dinner, and managed to spill some soup down the neck of Mr. Dingle's coat, causing him to leap to his feet and knock the remainder out of Eben's hands into the lap of another guest.

Then there was a row, and Mrs. Plunket scolded him so roundly for his stupidity that he almost thought she was in love with the parson, instead of regarding him as a bore.

But Dick explained it to him afterwards, telling him that his mother was obliged to appear friendly to guests whether she liked them or not; and once more was he set upon making it so hot for the parson that he would be glad to get out.

The next morning the Rev. Dingle got out of bed about five o'clock, and started for the bathing houses down on the beach.

Dick and Ebenezer followed him closely, and were in the water when the professor came out of his bath house, looking like anything but a fashionable preacher in his horrible bathing dress.

There was scarcely any surf that morning, and after swimming out a dozen rods or so, Ebenezer saw where the parson was going in, and throwing himself upon his back, he floated like a big log directly towards him, at the same time trying to look as much like a dead man as possible.

This was bound to create a sensation, but Dingle failed to see him until they came close together; but when he did get a look at him, he gave one yell and struck for the shore, fully

believing that a dead man was floating near him.

But the fat darkey was too smart for him, and making a dive underneath the parson, he arose to the surface again, taking him right up on his shoulders.

This only made matters worse, for supposing he was sitting astride a corpse, Dingle struggled and yelled all sorts of bloody murder.

But Eben stuck to him, and presently a big billow tumbled them both upon the beach, where they were quickly surrounded by a crowd of bathers, who were anxious to know what had happened.

"Oh, Lord—oh, Lord!" groaned Dingle.

"Am you conflumxed, sah?" asked Eben.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded Dingle.

"Ebenezer Crow, sah."

"Oh, Lord, I thought you was a floating corpse."

"An' I fought as how you war g'wine ter be one."

"What made you think so?"

"Cos I hearn you squeal like as if you hab de cramp in your fo' legs an' a shark war arter yer. So I went fo' ter rescue yer."

"Dear me, what a fright you gave me."

"An' you gib me one, too. But dat war all you gib me," said he, significantly.

"I—I don't think you deserve anything else, for it looks like a trick on your part," said Dingle, turning away to avoid both Eben and the crowd.

"Dat am all right, sah, but s'posin' I pass roun' de contribution box!"

Several people laughed at this, but Dingle made no reply. He felt greatly annoyed, and got out into the water again to be out of the way.

Of course he knew neither Dick nor Ebenezer in their outlandish bathing suits, for it would be hard work for one brother to recognize another if either was dressed in those suits.

But Mr. Dingle's troubles were not ended yet, for, after the excitement was over, Dick went up to the bath houses and succeeded cleverly in exchanging the tin painted numbers upon the doors. That is to say, he changed that on Dingle's door with the one on Ebenezer's, and then got out of the way to wait and see how the old thing would work.

He didn't have to wait long, for Dingle's sport and recreation had been spoiled for that morning; and being exceedingly nervous, he went out of the water and sought the proprietor, with whom he had left the key of his bathing-house.

He called for No. 20, and got it.

But he only let himself into the room hired by Ebenezer Crow, and seeing everything looking odd, he returned for an explanation.

He failed to get one; Dick and Ebenezer kept well out of sight.

"You called for No. 20 key and I gave it to you," said the proprietor; "and that was the room you hired."

"But there is a mistake, sir."

"Yes, there is; if you think to play me for a sucker," said the proprietor, winking slowly at Dingle.

"I am a clergyman, sir."

"All right; you'll be served just as well as any of my other customers; but that game's played out."

"What do you mean, sir—what game?"

"This mistake business. I suppose you want to get a better suit of clothes than your own?"

"No, sir; you are an impertinent fellow."

"I dare say; but you can't play a root here, not one. You have got the key to your room, and you will get no other. Understand?"

"You shall rue this, sir. I'll expose you, sir."

"All right; only don't expose yourself. Git!"

Seeing that there was no chance of getting satisfaction, the Reverend Dingle returned to the bathing-houses and waited in the hope of somebody coming out of the water to set matters right.

But Dick and Eben kept a good distance off, so as to appear to have nothing to do with the bath-houses near where he was, and so, finally, believing that a mistake had been made and somebody had skipped out with his black broadcloth suit, leaving him a suit of livery, he dressed himself as best he could in Eben's harness, after which he came timidly forth and stole cautiously back to the cottage.

But such a looking duck as he was can only be imagined, for he was thin and spare, and the reader can understand how much Ebenezer's clothes fitted him.

Well, after he got out of sight, Eben and Dick came out of the water, and dressed with all the haste they could, although the darkey had

dreadful hard work to force himself into the parson's clothes.

Dick was dressed and home first, where he found Parson Dingle in great misery, and his mother full of sorrow and wonder.

"Richard, where have you been?" she asked; for if this wasn't one of his tricks, she didn't know him, that was all.

"Been taking a walk through the town," replied Dick, looking as innocent as a sheep.

"Well, where is Ebenezer?"

"I don't know, unless he is down for a swim."

"Oh, this is dreadful!" said she.

"Dreadful is no name for it," replied Dingle.

"Think of the annoyance and the scandal. And this you believe to be your coachman's livery?" he added, whirling slowly around.

"I am almost positive of it."

"Not the slightest doubt of it," put in Dick.

"Oh, Lord! Just think of it," he moaned.

"But how does it happen that you have got our colored coachman's clothes on?" asked Dick.

Reverend Dingle told the story, and just as he finished, Ebenezer came limping up to confirm it, with a part of the parson's clothes on, and a portion under his arm.

"Ebenezer Crow, what does this mean?" demanded Mrs. Plunket, severely.

"Fo' de Lor', Missus Plunket, I couldn't tole yer," replied Ebenezer, honestly. "All dat I know am dat I hire bath-house No. 21, an' when I go dar after my swim, I fin' dese cluz dar instead ob my own."

"My experience, exactly," said Dingle.

"Why, then, it is clear that you have both made a mistake, that's all," said Mrs. Plunket, smiling.

"Yes, that's it," added Dick. "But it's one of the most comical mistakes that I ever witnessed."

"Not so very comical, I assure you, Master Richard," said Dingle, almost savagely.

"It strikes me as being very funny, and I guess you would think so if you could only see yourself in a mirror about now."

"Don't cast any reflections, my son."

"Wish I could; then he'd see how comical he looks."

"Waal, now, dis yer don't seem berry comical ter me noways. Look at me," said Ebenezer.

Dick laughed long and heartily, and to save her neck his mother could not help joining him, any more than Rose and one or two others could who had been attracted to the spot.

"Will you be good enough, sir, to take off my clothes?" asked Dingle.

"I'll gladly swap, sah," said Eben.

"Go right up stairs and make the change," said Mrs. Plunket, partially composed.

"Dicky, I feel dat you will hab ter come up wid me, an' help peel off dese yer pants. 'Peers like dey am skin-tight fo' me."

"Go right up, Richard, and render them what assistance you can. It is too bad, really."

Neither Dick nor Eben thought so, for they were enjoying the thing hugely. In fact, everybody seemed to be enjoying it but Parson Dingle.

Gladly would he have looked upon it as only a pleasant mistake, but somehow the looks that were exchanged between Dick and Ebenezer made him think that it was in some way a put-up job; especially since he recognized Eben as the man who frightened him so while in the water.

In the course of fifteen minutes they had exchanged clothing, and Ebenezer Crow was himself again. Not so the Rev. Dingle, however. The thing settled on him like a heavy dumpling, and he had no appetite for breakfast, feeling that he would be a laughing-stock for the whole family; and so he sent word to his hostess that he would not breakfast with her.

And perhaps it was just as well that he did not, for every person at the table was in a laughing mood, which they could have but poorly suppressed had he been there, and the meal was eaten and laughed down in his absence.

After breakfast, he called for Mrs. Plunket, and explaining to her his aversion to meeting with her family and friends after the ridiculous episode, he asked her, as a special favor, to make sure that the affair was not reported, and then he announced his intention of returning to New York.

In vain did Mrs. Plunket try to dissuade him from his purpose. He had much rather be kicked than laughed at, and he felt that he would surely be laughed at if he remained any longer.

She expressed her sorrow and regrets, and assured him that knowledge of the affair should never go beyond her own family; that it was simply a pleasing mistake; but he could not be

induced to stay, and Eben had the satisfaction of driving him to the depot.

"Dat am bounce No. 3," said he to Dick.

"And the jolliest one of them all," said he.

"By golly! but wasn't it funny?"

"You are right, it was," and they laughed long and merrily over it, as they were entitled to.

Mrs. Plunket strongly suspected that Dick had something to do with the affair, but she could get no proof of it, and so had to let it go for what it was worth.

It was nearly a week before anything else happened at the Plunket cottage, and then it rather went against Ebenezer Crow.

This was how it happened.

Provided he would do something for him, Dick had promised Ebenezer a new flannel bathing-suit, and he arranged it with the tailor to make it out of flannel that had never been shrunk, and also to have it so as to button up behind.

Ebenezer was tickled mightily with his present, and lost no time in getting into the water with it, where he disported for an hour or more, being a good swimmer and very fond of the water.

He would go in awhile and swim around, and then he would come out upon the beach and show off his new suit and his Apollo-like figure to the other bathers.

But in the meantime the flannel had shrunk so much that it sat as close as his own skin, and when he tried to get out of it, he found it impossible to do so, although he twisted and tried in every way.

Then he went out on the beach and walked around in the sun for the purpose of drying the suit, but he soon found that the more he dried it the tighter it was, and at last he concluded to put his clothes on over it and wait for a more favorable opportunity.

"Fo' de lor," he muttered, as he walked back to the cottage, "I mo' den half believe dat Dick Plunket know'd all 'bout dis yer. Dar am mo' debil in dat yer boy dan dar am meat in a pumpkin."

And when he got home he asked him about it; what it meant, his bathing-suit shrinking so.

"Oh, that's all right. That kind of flannel always shrinks. Made that way on purpose so that it will shrink close to your skin, for then you can swim better; see?"

"But how am I ter get 'em off?"

"Well, you'll have to take medicine if you want to get them off," said Dick, soberly.

"Go 'way dar!"

"Fact."

"What you gib me, taffy?"

"Oh, that's honest Indian. I thought you'd like it."

"Dicky, it am a beautiful suit, but a feller don't want fo' ter war it all de while, day and night."

"What! is it so tight as that?"

"Ob cose it am. Can't get out ob it no ways."

"All right. In that case you'll have to take medicine, sure pop."

"What sort?"

"You'll have to take about a gallon of 'Anti-Fat.'"

Ebenezer looked at him in surprise.

"That's your only show."

"Nice present dat war, warn't it!"

"How long did you stay in the water?"

"Bout an hour."

"An hour! All right; that settles it. Why, you big jackass, those suits were only made to be in the water ten or fifteen minutes. No wonder it shrunk."

"Am dat so?"

"Am dat so? Of course it is. You are always doing some foolish thing. Now you'll have to take several doses of that 'Anti-Fat' before you can get out of that bathing-suit. Guess I shall make you another present."

"Don't you do it, Dicky, don't make me no mo'."

"What do you mean?"

"Cos it 'pears like dat you hoodoo eberything dat you hab anything ter do with."

"Get out! You are giving me rock-candy."

"I 'clar to goodness, chile, dat am so."

"What are you whistling?"

"My stern convictions, Dicky," said he, sadly.

"Oh, you're too new. Go and get dust on yourself."

"Don't trifle wid me, Dicky; I feel bad."

"Well, you made a fool of yourself by staying in the water too long. No, you must take medicine to take the swelling out of your body before you can get out of your bathing suit."

"I'll cut 'm off."

"If you do you'll cut the skin. No, there

is only one way out of the trouble now, and that is a gallon of 'Anti-Fat.'"

Dick's poor dupe groaned, but not being sure whether he was fooling or not, he concluded to wear the suit for a few days without taking any of the medicine; but at the end of two days he found that it was clinging to him closer than ever.

So at last he concluded to try the "Anti-Fat," for the suit was thick and the weather so warm that it was sweating him to death.

He brought half a dozen bottles of the "Anti-Fat," and began to take it as a last resource.

But the joke was too good to keep all to himself, and so Dick told the colored cook all about it, and she rigged him unmercifully.

And yet he kept on taking his medicine with utmost faith in its virtues, for Dick kept at him all the while, and got a doctor living near to bear him out.

But after taking the entire dozen bottles, he found himself just as fat as ever, and the bathing suit just as loth to part company with him.

He was in agony all the while, and when he found that the medicine was doing no good, he began to kick and allow that it was all a job.

But Dick, with the assistance of the doctor before mentioned, managed to keep up the joke for two weeks, during which time he took not only the dozen bottles of "Anti-Fat," but several other kinds, none of which afforded the slightest relief, of course.

Then he got mad and confided his troubles to another physician in Long Branch, and he assisted him out of his troublesome suit by simply cutting off the buttons, and told him that he had been made a fool of.

"Dat yer war jus' what I 'spected," said he.

"Dat yer Dicky am wus den fly pizen. But you bet dat I will get squar wid him fo' dis yer. I'll jam a big umbrella down his froat—an open it," and he started back home with blood in his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

EBEN was one of those fellows who could not bear malice for any length of time, and especially against Dick, with whom he had himself played so many practical jokes on others.

And yet this particular racket was the worst that had ever been played on him, and he felt like breaking the young fellow all to pieces.

"Dicky, you an' I am two after now," said he.

"Not two of a kind, though?"

"No."

"All right; then we don't count in poker."

"It's done wid you, honey, an' don't you forget it. A joke am a joke, but dat bathin' suit am a little too much ob de good thing."

"Oh, I suppose so. That's all I ever got for making you presents. All right, I'm satisfied," said Dick, reproachfully.

"Dat cut too deep, Dicky."

"Well, it was your own fault."

"Dat am all nonsense; de doctor tole me dat it was a put up job."

"And he got you out of it, I suppose."

"You are right, he did, honey."

"Well, do you feel better now?"

"Ob cose I do; but you an' I am done."

"All right, I'm satisfied," said Dick, laughing.

"Please don't notice me in de futa neber mo', an' fo' you mudder's sake I won't harm you or take any mo' notice ob yer," and Ebenezer Crow turned and walked severely away.

Dick watched him a moment, and then burst out into a loud laugh.

"Dat's all right, Dicky," said Eben, looking back at the little torment.

Dick made no reply, but taking up his ball club he began knocking his ball as far away as he could, and his dog Nip would bring it to him again.

To tell the truth, Dick Plunket was lonesome—or he would have been dreadfully so had it not been for his dog and the fun he managed to have with Ebenezer, and once in a while some with his sister Rose, for there were no fellows of his age living very near to the cottage, and he had to depend upon his own ingenuity for what amusement he had.

Of course, his mother's visitors at her Long Branch cottage were no company for him, although once in a while a girl about his own age would be among them, and he would beau her around for awhile for lack of something better to do.

But it was not long after the events narrated in the last chapter that he developed a vein of fun that he had scarcely any suspicion of before.

The reader will remember the colored cook, Miss Assafidity Brown. She was quite a comely piece of amber-colored humanity, and Ebenezer had not long been a member of the Plunket family when he felt a queer palpitation under his vest whenever he was in her presence.

In short, he was "dead gone" on her, although she cared little or nothing for him, and thought more of her situation with Mrs. Plunket than she did of all the men in creation.

But the longer he lived under the same roof with her the bolder he became, and finally, after the family had gone to Long Branch, he plucked up courage enough to make love to her a little.

She laughed at him at first, but when he persisted in his nonsense she "kicked," and after a while threatened to scald him if he didn't keep away. But this failed to dampen his love.

Dick happened to meet her one day just after she had had a spat with Ebenezer.

"Halloo, Assy, what's the matter? You look as though you had been chewing pickles," he said, briskly.

"Bime-by you heah ob a pickle gettin' chawed; a big black one, an' don't you fo'get it, honey," said she.

"What's the row? Anybody stepped on your best corn?"

"Neber mine what de matter am, but if your mudder don't keep dat big black nigger out ob de kitchen, I jus' broke him all ter pieces wid a rolling pin."

"Oh—ho! Ebenezer?"

"Yes, de great black calf."

"What's the matter, Assy? Bothering you?"

"Yes, all de time."

"How?"

"Making lub ter me, de great fool."

"So—so! The fat rascal. I thought as much. Want you to marry him?"

Dick was ready to explode.

"Yes."

"And you don't want to?"

"No, I guess not, honey. Me marry! An' de idea ob dat great lubber wantin' ter get married when he can't take of himself. Big fool."

"Oh, Eben's a nice fellow."

"Don't care nuffin' 'bout him, nohow."

"He'd make you a bully husband."

"Husband! Now, I tole yer, Dicky, if he don't keep 'way from me wid his nonsense, I'll broke him all ter pieces; an' you tole him so."

"I'll help you cure him, Assy."

"You will? How?" she asked, slowly.

"I'll put up a job on him."

"What dat?"

"A joke, only you must help me. I'll tell him that you love him, and get him all excited, and then I'll tell you how to work the racket, eh?"

"All right, Dicky; if it'll only cure de big fool."

"I'll bet it will; just you keep quiet, and don't bluff him too hard, and I'll bet we'll make him sick."

"Good 'nough; I'm wid yer," said she, and exchanging her frown for a broad grin, she went about her work.

"Oh, if I don't put up a job on him!" mused Dick, going out to the carriage-house in search of Ebenezer.

He found him polishing the silver-mounted harness, and singing "Rose, coal-black Rose."

The row between them had been patched up, as dozens of other rows had been, and once more they were on speaking and friendly terms.

"Halloo, Sneezer," said Dick, for he called him that as often as Ebenezer; "how's the cook?"

"Miss Assafidity?" he asked, with a grin.

"Yes. Devilish nice girl, Sneezer."

"By golly, Dicky, if you nebber tole a wuss lie dan dat, you go whar de good darkey go, shuah."

"Of course she's a nice girl, and if I was going for a smoke-complexioned girl, she'd be my to-mato."

"Yah-yah-yah!" laughed Eben, opening his mouth as big as his head.

"I guess you are a little sweet there, Sneezer; eh?" and Dick chuckled him in the ribs.

"Oh, go 'way dar, chile, go 'way!" and again he laughed so loudly that the horse stopped eating.

"Nice, ain't she?"

"Nice? Oh, ham fat!" and he snapped his big jaws together several times. "I can taste her now!"

"And I guess she likes you pretty well, too."

"Go 'way dar. She don't care nuffin' fo' me."

"Yes she does. She tole me so."

"Go 'way!"

"Fact."
 "Oh, yum-yum!"
 "Only you don't know how to make her love you."
 "How dat?"
 "Don't you know that she's a very romantic creature?"
 "No."
 "Yes. Been reared a pet."
 "Guess dat am so, chile, for she am shuah fo' ter get into a pet if I make love to her," said he, more seriously.
 "Well, that's all right."
 "How dat all right?"
 "It's because you don't know how to make love to her. She's romantic, and of course wants a romantic lover, who will court her in a romantic way."
 "How dat, Dicky?" he asked, eagerly.
 "Why, write her poetry, and serenade her nights, and sigh like a dry wheelbarrow whenever you see her."
 "I can't write no poetry."
 "But you can sigh and look serious."
 "Yas, I can do dat."
 "And you can sing love songs."
 "Oh, yes."
 "And play the banjo."
 "Yes, but I hab got no banjo, Dicky."
 "Well, buy one. You can get one up in town; keep it in the carriage-house where you can practice without letting her hear you, and when you have got a few tunes by heart, then serenade her at midnight. You do this and I'll bet you'll catch her."
 "Do you fink so, Dicky?"
 "I am sure of it, and what is more, I'll help you work it, Eben."
 "Good 'nough, I'll try it. Gwine ter town dis yer very afternoon wid you mudder to do some shopping an' get some folks at de depot, an' I'll buy a banjo, shuah."
 "That's all right. Don't make much love to her until you give her a serenade. Keep quiet and I'll work things."
 "Oh, molasses!" ejaculated Ebenezer.
 "Mum, now, but remember that a faint heart never won a fair lady yet."
 "Yum—yum—yum!"
 With this understanding, they separated; and that afternoon, on his return from town, he brought a banjo, and a more delighted darkey than he was couldn't be found in Long Branch.
 He was a very fair player on a banjo, having learned it years before, and he had a fine voice for singing. Every moment that he could escape from his duties he was singing and playing out in the carriage-house.
 Now right here the reader must be introduced to a new character, Miss Angelia Spooner, the young lady whom Ebenezer had driven from the depot the very day he bought the banjo.
 Miss Angelia Spooner was a schoolmate of Rose Plunket, and was one of the most romantic and gushing creatures in the world. She wasn't exactly a flirt, but she was continually falling in love with new faces, and seemed to feel certain that every man who smiled upon her or showed her any politeness was dead in love with her.
 On the way down from New York on the boat she had been introduced to a Cuban gentleman who professed to be greatly taken with her, and she, of course, was at once wildly in love with him.
 She did nothing but talk about him for the next few days, and until everybody in the cottage was sick of hearing it, but no one more so than Dick, who wasn't the least bit of a "spoon."
 But during all this time he was training Ebenezer and arranging matters with the cook, Miss Brown. Finally he had everything in working order, and this letter, which he wrote and addressed to Miss Angelia Spooner, put a good finish to the preparations.
 "FAIREST OF THE FAIR.—To see you once is to love you ever. Ever since our meeting and introduction on the steamboat, I have not known one moment's rest, or one of happiness, save when I have been gazing on your abode. Do not think me bold, fair one, because I have taken pains to learn where you are visiting, and to learn whether I am in your favor or not. I shall make bold to pour forth the sentiments of my heart to-night in a love serenade at midnight, and if you are seated on the front piazza nearest to the path, I shall then know that I may hope—may speak.
 YOUR SLAVE."

Dick had great bother in composing this letter, but with the assistance of an old "letter writer," he finally got it out as given here.
 Well, Miss Angelia Spooner received it and

went into ecstasies over it. It was a clear case of "mash," and Dick knew that she would be at the appointed place at the appointed time.
 The next thing to do was to work Ebenezer Crow into form in order to carry out his joke, and to make it all the more effective, he had to partially unfold his plan to his sister Rose as well as the cook.
 "Now, Sneezzer," said he, "I have worked it all right."
 "Go 'long, chile! You don't go fo' ter tell me so," said he, with a tremendous grin.
 "Fact. I have been giving it to her sweet about you," said the rogue, earnestly.
 "Oh, chile!"
 "Now I have fixed it nice; and I told her if she would be out on the piazza at twelve o'clock to-night she would hear some music, and she said she would be there."
 "Go 'way, chile!" and he poked him in the ribs.
 "Yes, and you must get in your best work."
 "Oh co'se I will."
 "Hide behind the syringa bushes and play and sing until she speaks, and then you can come out."
 "Got some nice songs, Dicky," said he, earnestly.
 "And if she speaks to you, you must use all the nice, fine, big words you can think of."
 "Dickey, see dat dictionary! I hab learned all de big words dar am on five pages. Oh, I'll 'stonish her or my name amn't Ebenezer Crow."
 "That's right. Now be on hand at midnight."
 "Don't you whistle dat I won't, honey."
 "Well, keep mum," said Dick, going into the house.
 By this the reader can see that Dick Plunket had a nice little plot on foot, and we will see how it worked.
 At midnight Ebenezer Crow, dressed in his best Sunday suit, stole forth from the carriage house where he had kept his banjo and dictionary.
 Even before he appeared Miss Spooner had left her chamber, dressed in a fantastic evening costume, all unbeknown, as she thought, and took a seat on the piazza behind the climbing honeysuckles, there to await the coming of her beloved troubadour.
 Rose, Dick, and the cook were also secreted in the conservatory where they could see and hear without being seen by the interested lovers.
 Ebenezer was on time, and lightly touching the strings of his banjo, he began to sing "Ellen Bain," and it was no slouch of a performance, either.
 Angelia was in ecstasies.
 Her very ideal of a romantic lover was even then beneath her lattice.
 All that she had ever seen on the stage or read in perfumed novels was here personified.
 She sighed.
 And gushed.
 And almost fainted with pleasurable excitement, and all the while Ebenezer Crow was putting in his big licks, thinking that he was surely captivating the heart of the beautiful Assafidity Brown.
 Finishing "Ellen Bain," he started "Beautiful Dreamer," and this did the business, although the secreted conspirators were nearly bursting with suppressed laughter.
 "Oh, how tender and sweet!" sighed Angelia, as Ebenezer finished the song.
 "Fairest ob you sex, am de gushin's ob dis heart contemporaneous wid de longitude of de speculation in dem sweet eyes?" asked Ebenezer, coming from behind the clump of bushes where he had been standing.
 She remembered that her worshiper was a Cuban, and of course, hadn't perfect command of our language, and so she simpered "yes."
 "Oh, bid me approach nearer, so dat de envious darkness shall not hide you longer from de ravishment ob my lubin' gaze," said he, tenderly.
 "Yes, come," she whispered.
 Ebenezer threw down his banjo, and darting around to the steps leading to the piazza, he was quickly by the side of the trembling girl.
 "Oh—oh!" was all she said as he took her hand; but it was so dark that she could hardly tell whether he was black or white.
 "Sweetest an' lubliest ob you sex, come to dis yer amitative, palpitating buzzum," said he, folding her in his arms.
 "Oh—oh!" she whined, as she trustingly nestled her head on his broad shoulder.
 Just then Dick Plunket threw up the slide of a big dark lantern that he had purchased for the purpose, and a flood of light almost dazzled them.
 They both looked up, and then beheld each

other, and at the same time a loud laugh from the conspirators greeted them.
 Uttering one high-note scream, Angelia Spooner tumbled over in a faint, while Ebenezer appeared to be utterly dumfounded and could not move.
 "Halloo, Eben!" said Miss Brown, laughing, while Rose and Dick ran to assist Miss Spooner.
 "What am de matter?" Eben asked, after gazing from one to another for a moment.
 "Dat's what I'se askin' you," said Miss Brown. Eben gazed but a moment more before he tumbled.
 "By golly! some mo' ob dat young rascal's debility!" saying which he darted into the house, and was soon lost behind the door of his own room, where he proceeded to club himself during the next half-hour.
 Poor Angelia Spooner!
 She was revived with considerable difficulty, for the shock had well-nigh paralyzed her; and without saying a word or asking a question, she went to her room, and her romantic serenade was finished in a good long cry.
 As for Rose and Dick, she resolved never to see or speak to them again, for they were undoubtedly the ones who put up the job; and after reporting the outrage to Mrs. Plunket, she made up her mind to leave Long Branch for good, fearful lest the ridiculous affair might become known.
 The next morning she did not appear at breakfast, and after telling Mrs. Plunket all about it, she asked to be driven to the depot to catch the very next train.
 No one objected to her going, and no one felt sorry, with the exception of Ebenezer Crow, who had to drive her there in the family carriage. He would much rather have taken a good kicking by a healthy mule, but he had to go. Not a word passed between them, however.
 But Ebenezer had fully made up his mind to murder Dick Plunket. His great revenge had stomach for nothing less than the ensanguinization of a small tract of country with the blood of that mischievous rascal who had got him on such a string.
 But Dick kept out of sight during the next day or two, and arranged with Miss Brown to smooth down Eben's ruffled feathers.
 This was easily done, after all, for she had only to tell him that there was no job; that she had intended to go out on the piazza for the purpose of hearing a serenade (although she intimated that she should not have gone had she known who the serenader was going to be), but before she could get there Miss Spooner had taken the seat.
 This taffy partially satisfied him, although there were several other things, such as the dark lantern and the presence of Miss Rose, that he could not account for.
 "Dickey," said he, afterwards, "you is too new. You am too recent."
 "What's the matter with you?" asked Dick.
 "We won't arguefy de case, but somehow you am de debil at getting me inter scrapes."
 "Nonsense, Sneezzer, it wasn't my fault; it just happened so, that's all. If that girl hadn't been in the way you would have scored several points."
 "I don't believe you, Dicky."
 "All right; but I'm giving it to you square; you did it splendid, and as it turned out, she is just mashed on you, Sneezzer."
 "Dickey, you allus fools so much."
 "No, I don't. It was all put up first rate, only Miss Spooner got in the way."
 "Oh, Lord, how she did look at me!" said Eben, forgetting his indignation and laughing heartily.
 "I guess she has got her corsets full of romance this time. But now don't you make any mistake. The cook loves you better than ever, and all you have got to do is to follow the thing up."
 "How dat, Dicky?"
 "Oh, I won't be bothered with it any more."
 "Why not?"
 "Because you have lost faith in me."
 "No, Dicky, but—"
 "That's it."
 "Waal, it do seem quar."
 "I'll see her once more, if you say so; but if you fail this time, you'll have to paddle your own canoe."
 "All right. Fix it up wid her, Dicky."
 "I'll see her—keep dark," and with this they separated.
 In a day or two afterwards he had arranged another job with Miss Brown for Ebenezer's benefit.
 The job worked in this way:
 "I've fixed things, Eben," said Dick.
 "Pshaw, chile," said he, trying to blush.

"Yes. She is going to be alone in the dining-room to-night, and she says she will receive you there at nine o'clock, if you will only come blindfolded."

"Blindfolded! What dat fo'?"

"Well, I don't exactly know. You know they say that love is blind, and perhaps that is why she wants you to come blindfolded. You know she is very romantic?"

"How I find my way?"

"I'll lead you in, and leave you alone with her, after which you must work your own points."

"All right, I'll go, Dicky."

"Go and cut a nice bouquet, and carry it in your hand when you go in. She will wear another just like it on her bosom. When you enter the room you must fall back on your dietianary, and say that you come blind—go it blind, you know—into her sweet presence, and ask her to accept your bouquet. If she loves you, (uow mind, I'm giving it to you in solid hunks), she will take your bouquet, and give you the one she wears."

"Oh, yam—yum—yum!"

"Do you see the point?"

"Dat's all right, Dicky."

At the appointed hour Ebenezer was on hand, fixed in his best harness, and armed with the finest bouquet in the garden.

And Dick was on hand to work his part of it.

Tying a handkerchief over his eyes in such a way as to prevent him from seeing, and waiting until he was sure that the family were all in the parlor, Dick led him to the dining-room door.

"Now get in your fine work," he whispered.

"You bet. Wait outside a minit an' heah me."

"All right."

Ebenezer opened the door and walked cautiously into the dining-room where Miss Brown was in waiting.

"Lub am blin', Miss Brown, an' I, de personification ob lub, offer you dis yer bouquet," said he, holding it out.

"Which I accept, and offer you this one in return. Smell deeply ob its sweetness, fo' dat am like my lub fo' you," said she, offering him a bouquet well sprinkled with red pepper.

"Oh, see me go right down to de roots ob ebry posy," said he, placing it to his nose and taking a good snuff.

The next instant he was trying to sneeze his head off, and to turn end over end while doing so.

Miss Brown darted out of the room and went to her own.

Such a yelling, dancing and sneezing was never heard before, and by the time he got the bandage from his eyes, the whole household was aroused by the noise he made, and came hurriedly to see what the matter was.

CHAPTER IX.

EBENEZER alarmed the whole household as he danced, sneezed, and roared. Mrs. Plunket and Dick ran to the dining-room to see what the uproar was all about, and there they found Eben, trying to get his blindfold off, and doing some of the hardest sneezing ever heard at Long Branch.

"Mercy on me, what is the matter?" she asked.

"What are you doing, Sneezer?" asked Dick, for it will be remembered that he called him this for a nickname.

"I—I—I—ah—te—chew!—ar—te—chew!" was his only response; and then he would try some more to get the handkerchief from his eyes.

"What are you doing, Ebenezer Crow?" again demanded Mrs. Plunket.

"I—I—I—che—who!—che—who!—che—whoop!" he roared; and during the struggle he pulled the bandage from his eyes.

By this time everybody in the cottage, with the exception of the cook, Miss Brown, had filed into the dining-room to see the show.

Ebenezer still danced, sneezed, and clawed the air, without being able to articulate three words together.

"Tell me what the trouble is," again demanded Mrs. Plunket, this time sharply.

"Che—who! che—who! che—who!" he whooped, pointing to the bouquet on the floor that had caused all the trouble.

Mrs. Plunket picked it up.

"What of it?" she asked, looking from it to the wild-eyed, sneezing darkey.

"Smole ob it," he managed to say, and then he went into the sneezing business again.

Dick wanted to prevent her from smelling of it, but had he attempted to do so, it would have given him away badly.

Mrs. Plunket placed it to her nose and took a

good smell. There still remained red pepper enough in it for all purposes, and no sooner had she inhaled it, than she threw it away, threw back her head, and began to sneeze herself.

Then the fun began, and during the next five minutes there was a discharge by first Ebenezer Crow, and then by Mrs. Plunket.

Dick almost laughed himself into convulsions, while the others looked on in astonishment.

"Go it! I'll bet on Eben," said the rogue.

Finally Mrs. Plunket took a drink of ice water, and afterward, by washing her nose in it, managed to stop her sneezing almost entirely.

But Eben kept at it until he produced a bunion on his big, flat nose.

"Oh, I knew that Eben would beat you, mammy," said Dick, bantering her.

"Stop your talk, Richard Plunket. Is this some of your work?"

"I think that you and Eben appear to be doing all the work there is about it," said he, laughing.

"Well; is it some of your play, then?"

"No, mammy, honest Indian."

"How is it, Ebenezer?" she asked, turning to him.

"Putty bad, missus; putty bad," he moaned, and then discharged his nasal artillery again.

"I mean who did it?"

"It war a mean trick, whoeber did it."

"Answer me instantly; who did this?" said she.

"Assafidity Brown!"

"The cook?"

"Yas, de cook. She play a bad joke on me, an' I shall punish her," said he, wiping his bugle.

Mrs. Plunket rang the bell leading to that young amber-colored cook's chamber, and she knew by the way it slammed and jingled that there was a circus going on down stairs.

Miss Brown had not yet retired, but stood in the open door of her room listening to the music. She knew the whole thing had got to come out now, and so she resolved on telling the truth and taking all the responsibility upon her own shoulders.

With a dark frown on her maiden brow, she obeyed the summons of her mistress, and appeared before her.

"Cook, what is the meaning of this?" she demanded.

Both Dick and Ebenezer wished themselves out of the way just then. In fact, Eben would have given anything in the world to have been buried in the sand.

"Well, Mrs. Plunket, dat fool nigger, dat Ebenezer Crow, he all de while come foolin' round me," said she.

"Fooling! How?"

"Makin' lub ter me; great fool!"

"Dat amn't so, missus," said Eben, between two sneezes.

"What isn't so; that you are a fool, or that you do not annoy her?"

"It am a conspiracum again my character."

"He's all the while foolin' round me an' wantin' me fo' ter marry him."

"Missus, I jus' wouldn't marry dat gal if she war hung wid diamonds."

"No, I bet you wouldn't if I didn't have one," she retorted, quickly.

"But how about that bouquet?"

"Well, I thought I'd play a trick on him to see if I couldn't cure him ob he foolishness, dat's all."

"Well, don't you dare do such a thing again."

"But he mus' keep away from me wid his nonsense foolin' or I serve him wus nor dat."

"Ebenezer, you behave yourself, and don't let me know of your annoying her again. Do you hear?"

"Yes'm. No danger ob dat. She hab got too much deviltrum in her fo' ter please me."

"Then it will be all the easier for you to obey me," said Mrs. Plunket, going from the room.

Dick went off out of doors and had a good laugh all by himself, and the cook returned to her room.

As for Ebenezer, he was in a quandary, what time he wasn't sneezing.

"By golly," he mused, "I fink, after all, dat de whole trouble war made by dat Dick, an' now I feel dat I shall hab fo' to kill him, shuah. He's all de while up to some deviltrum, an' now I see a good mind fo' ter broke him all ter smash."

But this wasn't the first time by a dozen that he had threatened to wipe the young rascal from the face of the earth, and still Dick lived and never let up on him for any length of time.

They didn't meet again that night, and by the next morning Eben's wrath had considerably cooled.

But not towards the handsome cook. He

still felt awfully foolish over the affair, and she laughed right in his face when they met next morning.

"Tink you're mighty smart, don't yer?" he sneered.

"How'd you like that bouquet?" she asked, laughing.

"Oh, I pay you fo' dat some day, neber fear."

"Better keep 'way from me or I scald de wool all off your ugly head."

"Go 'way! Wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole."

"I wouldn't let yer do it."

"All right. You'll see one ob dese days," said he, going about his morning work.

"I see now. Don't catch me wastin' my time wid a fool nigger dat don't know no better dan ter serve tomatoes 'undressed," and she laughed heartily.

Ebenezer remembered the tomtato snap, as the reader undoubtedly does, and whenever it was mentioned he felt sick and foolish and had nothing to say. It was a settler.

In a short time after this he met Dick, who still had a grin on his face. In truth, he looked as though he had slept with it on all night, and was still unable to get rid of it.

"Well, Sneezer, how do you feel this morning?"

"I feel jus' like fo' ter kill somebody," said he, "an' I guess you are de chap."

"Me? What have I done?" he asked, in surprise.

"I don't know fo' shuah, but I tink dat you hab a finger in dat bouquet."

"Well, that wasn't half so bad as having your nose in it," said Dick, laughing. "But you know that I had nothing to do with that. You heard her say last night why she did it."

"But it smells like one ob yer games. Dat gal amn't smart 'nough to do dat alone."

"Oh, yes she is. She was only teasing you. She loves you yet."

"What dat? Lubs me? Well, she hab a mighty funny way ob showin' it, dat's what I say."

"Oh, that's the way with the girls; they love to tease their admirers."

"She won't tease me any mo'."

"Well, it was rather rough, I must say. But always remember that 'faint heart ne'er won fair lady yet.' You can win her."

"Don't want nuffin' to do wid her."

"Oh, yes you do. You know you are dead mashed on her, and she is on you."

"By golly, it looks like it!"

"That's nothing; only a little bit of fun. I'll bet a hat that you'll catch her yet."

"All right; I bet you dat hat."

"Good enough. The fact is, you have had rather a rough streak of luck lately, but it'll be all right, and you and she will get married yet."

"Go 'way, chile. Remember dat hat."

"All right; I'll remember it," said Dick, starting away with his dog for his morning plunge in the breakers.

The cloud began to vanish from Ebenezer's brow, and a grin was trying to take its place. But it wasn't a very healthy-looking grin, though.

A week passed away without anything happening of any particular moment, but Ebenezer didn't appear to get ahead much with Miss Assafidity Brown. He didn't make himself very fresh around her, however, for she persisted in laughing at him all the while.

But he and Dick were on good terms again, and it was while the young mischief was studying up some other job to play on him that a new character arrived at the cottage, in the person of a Quaker gentleman from Philadelphia.

His name was Simon Pure, and he was a regular "shad-belly," dressed in the doleful Quaker garb, and wearing a face that was even more doleful and woebegone than his dress.

He was about fifty years of age, and had been a widower for the past five, and his object now was to get another wife. He had heard of Widow Plunket's comeliness and wealth, and feeling that she undoubtedly wanted to get married again, he managed to get an introduction to her, and on account of the person who acted as introducer, Mrs. Plunket invited him to call again, which he was not slow to do, although he was somewhat shocked to find her such a gay, light-hearted person, and withal so fashionable.

Just at that time it was somewhat dull at the cottage, and she was glad to have company of almost any kind, although she knew at once what his object was. But she concluded that she could have a little amusement and no harm done.

And Dick concluded the same thing, for of all

the old guys he had ever seen, Simon Pure was the boss.

And he had an understanding with Ebenezer Crow, and together they laughed and talked the matter over.

But the old rooster was bent on making love to the gay Widow Plunket, and she was bent on having all the fun she could out of him.

It took two or three visits, however, to get his courage up sufficient to begin the business, and even then she so carefully parried his advances that he hardly knew how or where to begin; and besides, he could never find her alone long enough to make a beginning.

But on the occasion of his third call, Dick managed it so as to get his mother alone in the arbor, where Simon found her reading a book. Dick, Ebenezer and Rose were concealed in a shrubbery so they could hear all that was said.

Simon looked just as doleful as ever, and much more like a person going to a funeral than one going to make love. He took off his broad-brimmed hat, and proceeded at once to business.

"My dear widow, like you I am alone in the world," he began.

"Indeed, Mr. Pure," said she, looking up from her reading.

"Yea, verily, death stole my wife," said he, looking as sorrowful as a sick calf.

"Ah. Might I inquire how long since you met the infliction which weighs you down so sadly?"

"Five years and over," he sighed, turning up his eyes as though he expected to see her ghost somewhere.

"Well, I should suppose you would think of finding someone to take her place," said she, helping him along.

"Verily, Mrs. Plunket, I am thinking of it; in fact, that is my business here."

"Indeed."

"Yea, verily, Widow Plunket; I find that it is not good for a man to be alone. I heard of your great beauty and domestic worth, and so I came to ask you to take the place of my sainted Hannah."

"Why, Mr. Pure, you astonish me!"

"Oh, say that you will!" said he, dropping his broad-brimmed hat, and kneeling upon it before her.

Just then Dick and Rose entered the arbor, and Simon struggled to his feet, all blushes and confusion. He felt as though he would have liked to be stepfather to them for about ten minutes.

"Halloo, Simon! what's the matter?" asked Dick.

"I—I, that is to say, I was looking for something."

"Oh! lost something?"

"Yes—no—I was seeking for something."

"Shall I help you?"

"No—no. I—"

"Richard—" his mother appeared to be on the verge of chiding him for his familiarity, but she did not.

Just then the "yah-yah-yah!" of Ebenezer Crow was heard only a few yards away, and Simon concluded that he was being trifled with. He took a seat and said nothing, but, oh! how he did think!

Then two or three callers came, and there was no further show for Simon to do any more courting that day; and as Mrs. Plunket excused herself with charming grace and went into the house with her friends, he found himself alone with the mischievous Dick.

"Did I disturb you, Mr. Pure?" he asked.

"Yes, you did; I was about saying something to your charming mother when you came in."

"Oh! I thought you were looking for something."

"Well, so I was, but—"

"Oh, that's all right. I know what your little game is, old man," said Dick, winking at him.

"What's that, young man?" he asked, sharply.

"Oh, I'm fly."

"You're what?"

"Fly. I can look a hole right through a cheese," getting up as though to take his leave.

"You're after mammy," said Dick, placing his finger alongside of his nose and winking again.

"Young man, you are very forward," said he.

"Oh, no, only fly. But it's all right; I'm your katydid, I'm all right."

Simon Pure regarded him closely.

"I think you'd make a bully step-father."

Now he became interested.

"Do you, though?"

"Of course I do. I always wanted a step-daddy."

"I'm right glad to hear you say so."

"Now I'll help you work the racket"

"You will? How?" he asked, eagerly.

"I'll tell you where you can see her all alone and talk it over."

"Where?"

"She goes out to walk every pleasant night all alone."

"She does? Where?"

"The old man was getting off his base."

"Up the road along there under that row of trees, and every night about nine o'clock."

"And will she go there to-night?"

"Of course. She's funny about that. She always goes alone and wears a veil, and you can meet her and talk the thing all over. What say?"

"I'll surely be there," said he. "Don't say a word about it, and I'll reward you handsomely."

"Oh, that's all right."

"I'll go now. Make my excuses to her, and I will see you again to-morrow."

"Good enough," and Dick shook hands with the old rooster, and looked as honest as a cow.

As soon as he had left the place, Dick sought Ebenezer, and put up a job, after which he let his sister Rose into it, and they had a jolly laugh.

That night, at about nine o'clock, a lone female might have been seen walking pensively along under the trees which grew by the roadside.

Simon Pure was on hand.

He saw her, and eagerly sought her side.

"Ah, my dear widow."

The widow gave a little start, and said:

"Oh!"

"How fortunate that I should find you here all alone, where no one can interrupt us, as they did this afternoon when I was on the point of asking you to be my wife," and went on giving all the taffy he could hand out; but she made no reply.

"Speak to me, my dear widow, and say you will be mine," said the ardent old shad-belly, placing his arm around her plump waist. "Say—oh, say that hand shall be mine!"

"Yah, by gosh! an' I gubs it to yer right atween de eyes!" said Ebenezer, for he it was, dressed in woman's clothes; and planting a well-directed blow on the old fellow's mug, he sent him keeling over into the street with a grunt that might have been heard a mile away.

"Take dat, yer big duffer! Better not come foolin' round me wid yer nonsense."

"Oh—oh!" he grunted, and at that moment Dick and Rose came along, although he did not know them. "I—I made a mistake," he added, getting up and looking into Eben's black face.

"You bet dat you make a mistake if you go fo' ter play any ob yer funny business 'round me."

"I beg your pardon."

"Go 'way wid yer—I know yer. You am Mr. Pure, an' you visit my missus, Mrs. Plunket."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Simon.

"I is Mrs. Plunket's cook an' I shall tole her all 'bout it; see 'f I dont."

"No—no, don't do that. Please don't and I'll reward you handsomely. Here's ten dollars."

"Ten dollars! What you take me for?" sneered Ebenezer, playing his part well.

"Well, here is twenty. Take it and say nothing."

"All right," and he pocketed the two X's.

Simon Pure didn't wait to see whether the real widow he was looking for came along or not, for his humiliation nearly prostrated him; and he started for his hotel, feeling perfectly certain that that little devil's imp had played the joke on him, and that he would surely be the laughing stock of the town if he remained in it another day.

And if it needed anything more to convince him that he had been made an ass of, and had made one of himself, the chorus of laughter which saluted him after he had got a few rods away furnished it.

"Good-by, Simon!" shouted Dick.

"Ta-ta, step-papa!" said Rose.

"Want ter come foolin' round heah some mo'?" called Ebenezer Crow.

Of course Simon Pure made no reply, but what a thinking he kept up; and private cussing.

And what a gait he kept up until he reached his hotel.

"I want to live just long enough to get hold of that young scapegrace," he growled, with clenched teeth and fists.

But he never had that pleasure, for he got out of Long Branch by the first train in the morning.

This was the last beau that Mrs. Plunket had that season, for it soon came to be understood among fortune-hunters that it was a bad place to visit, and so she was allowed to have a rest.

Ebenezer laughed himself almost blind over the affair, and it soon became known all over town, and finally it got into the papers.

And the Widow Plunket pretended that she was dreadfully shocked, and went through the farce of giving both Dick and Ebenezer a scolding for the racket they had indulged in; but out of their presence she laughed as heartily as anybody.

But Dick wasn't half satisfied yet. In fact, he never had fun enough out of anything to satisfy him, and so he put up another job on Ebenezer out of this one on Simon Pure.

In order to do this, he had an understanding with the cook, and then told Eben that she was awfully indignant on account of his getting into petticoats and pretending to be Miss Brown, thereby bringing scandal upon her good name, and that she was about to have him arrested and handed over to the mercies of "Jersey Justice."

This frightened the poor devil nearly to death, and he begged in the most piteous tones for Dick to see and persuade her from her course.

Dick agreed to do it, and then had another talk with the cook, he and she being quite confidential friends.

"I've fixed it, Sneezer," said he to the cautious darkey, "but you'll have to pay her damages."

"How dat? How much?" he asked, eagerly.

"She says if you'll buy her a new silk dress, and never speak to her again, she'll let up on you."

"I'll do it, but I'll neber hab any mo' fo' to do wid you, Dicky Plunket—neber—neber! I's al-lus gettin' de wus ob it whenever I hab anyfin' fo' ter do wid yer. I buy her dat silk wardrobe, an' den I shook de two ob yer, and settle down like a man!" and raising his hands, with a solemn shake-of his mug, he walked away.

Miss Assafidity Brown got her silk dress, but it nearly broke Ebenezer's heart, for, if he laughs best who laughs last, he was the victim in every sense.

A week passed away, and during the time Eben never exchanged a word with Dick, although he resorted to all sorts of experiments to get on speaking terms with him again; and at length he began to conclude that he had killed the goose that had been laying his golden eggs of fun.

Meanwhile, Ebenezer was working up a job on him that should pay him off for old and new.

"Oh, I make him so sick dat he send fo' de doctor, fo' shuah; I broke him all up. I make him wish dat he war nebbber bone into de wuld. An' I make dat wench sick, too; I make her wish dat she neber see dat silk dress dat she flaunt 'round in. I make her wish dat she marry me, see 'f I dont," he would mutter.

And he at once set about putting up the job which was to avenge the many that had been worked on him by Dick and the cook.

CHAPTER X.

EBENEZER was now seeking for revenge of the wildest kind, on both Dick Plunket and the sable cook, Miss Assafidity Brown.

But he wanted to get in the hardest lick on Dick, for he now understood that this young rogue was the author of all his miseries and the concoctor of all the practical jokes of which he was the victim.

He felt as though he would liked to have broken an arm or a leg of the cook whom he had tried in vain to make love to, but he wanted to crush Dick into snuff.

After the last racket, which will be remembered, he was so mad that he couldn't half think, and it wasn't until the next morning that he could calmly study on some plan of getting square with Dick Plunket.

"I jes' luf dat gal go fo' de present, and pay 'ticular 'tention to dat boy," he muttered. "I jus' make 'em sick one at a time."

The next day Dick and his sister were up in town visiting somewhere, and Eben had all the time he wanted to concoct his retaliatory mischief in, and it was not long before he hit upon an idea.

Out by the stable there was a big tub, a half of a hogshead, turned bottom up, and this was a favorite seat for Dick. He would take Ebenezer's banjo out there where no one could hear him and pick away on it for hours at a time.

This was his big idea. To put about half a pound of powder under this tub, and have a fuse attached to it in such a way as to enable him to blow him up some time when he caught him sitting there all unsuspecting. It might break the banjo, but he didn't care for that so long as it broke Dick's head.

And he concluded that his mother wouldn't blame him much, for he had often heard her say to Dick that she wouldn't blame Ebenezer much if he retorted severely to pay for his many pranks.

That afternoon he drove Mrs. Plunket and a lady friend out for their usual ride, and while they were making a call, he drove to a store and bought some powder and about a yard of fuse.

The satisfied grin that rested upon his fat face as he drove back home again attracted the attention of everyone on the road, and people concluded that Mrs. Plunket's fat coachman had had his salary raised.

It wasn't that, exactly, but he was thinking about raising somebody himself.

So after finishing his work he placed the powder in an old preserve can, and arranged it and the fuse under the tub all lovely.

"Oh, maybe not!" he chuckled. "I blow him higher than a kite, an' when he come down I guess he stop he foolin' wid dis chile!" and then he went about his other duties smiling, and evidently feeling that he could bide his time.

Now it so happened that Dick saw him at the store, and after he had made his purchase and gone away, he asked the merchant what he had bought, and of course found out.

"I wonder what the fat rascal is going to do with powder?" he mused. "I'll just watch him;" and shortly after that he returned home.

He knew of course that it would do no good to ask him about it, so he resolved to find out for himself; and so good did Eben feel over his plot that he was quite talkative, although, until then, he had not spoken a word to him since the last racket.

And this, too, looked suspicious, and made Dick look around sharp.

The next morning he began to search for some trace of the powder, and in this he was aided by his black and tan terrier, Nip, who seemed to understand what his little master was looking for. So he presently led the way to the big tub, having seen Ebenezer place the powder under it, and began to dig with his paws under one edge of it where it rested on the ground, and at the same time barking sharply.

"Be still, Nip," said Dick, calling to him.

But the dog kept on digging and barking in a strange sort of way, and every now and then he would stop and look at Dick so knowingly that he at last attracted his attention.

"What the deuce is the matter with you—rat?" he asked, approaching the tub.

A sharp, coaxing bark was his answer, and as assisting Nip to catch rats was one of his happiest pastimes, he at once concluded to tip up the tub so as to allow the anxious dog to get at his prey.

And he proceeded to do so, but the dog didn't appear to be as excited as usual.

"Sic him!" said Dick, but as there was no game there to "sic," the dog stood still, looking first at the can and then up at his master who stood above the tub as it rested on its edge, and so could not see the object of his anxiety.

"Confound you, what's the matter, anyway?" and he was about to let the heavy tub drop back into its place again, when the peculiar expression of his dog attracted his notice, and he stooped down to look.

Then, of course, he saw the powder and fuse, and he knew then all about it.

"So—so, the fat rascal intends to blow me up to get square, does he? Well, that's cool. Why, confound him, he has got powder enough there to blow me over the stable. Good for you, Nip; for without you I should never have found it," he added, addressing his dog.

He placed the tub carefully back in its place again, and walked away as though nothing had happened, but all the while thinking of it.

It was evident that he intended to set fire to the fuse sometime when he found him there playing on the banjo, and now he must watch sharp, for if he knew himself as well as he thought he did, he didn't intend to get "raised" in that manner.

But he was just as full of smiles and jokes as Ebenezer was when he met him, and that darkey never suspected that his gunpowder plot had been discovered.

About noon Dick took the banjo and went out to the tub, and sat down on it to play, first making sure that the fuse was placed so that Eben could not get at it without his seeing him.

Lighting a segar, he began to pick away, but he hadn't been there five minutes before Ebenezer Crow made his appearance. This confirmed his suspicions.

"Halloo, Sneezer," said Dick, carelessly.

"Halloo! 'Pears ter me dat you don't get 'long

berry well on dat yer southern piano," said he, with a grin.

"Well, no. I fear I shall never make a banjo player, but I'll keep on trying."

"Dat am de only way, honey."

"But I can rattle the bones, though."

"Dat am a fac', Dicky. 'Pears like dat you mus' hab cull'd blood in yer, de way you do make dem bones talk—golly!"

All the while he was edging around to the side of the tub where the fuse was, but Dick had his eye on him.

"I say, Sneezer, you aren't mad with me, are you?" he said, in his old wheedling way.

"Dicky, I don't want yer fo' ter bring up none ob dem yer painful recollections. I gibs yer fair notice dat I am gwyne fo' ter get squar' wid yer," said he, in a tone of voice that convinced Dick that he was in earnest about it.

"All right; go ahead; I hate a fellow who can't take a joke. But, I say, you take the banjo and let me go for my bones, and we'll have a little concert."

"All right; dar am nuffin' mean 'bout me," said he, taking the banjo, while Dick went around into the stable after his bones.

"Guess dat I'll light a segar so as ter be ready, provided I get a chance fo' ter raise him," said he.

He proceeded to light a cheap segar, at the same time glancing down to see if the fuse was all right.

Dick was soon back again.

"Set on de tub, Dicky; I'd rather stan' up!"

"Nonsense! how can you play standing?" asked Dick, fully comprehending what his object was.

"Play all de better, honey," said Eben, tuning up his banjo.

"But I can't play the bones sitting. Sit down. What's the matter with you?"

It wasn't exactly what he wanted or had calculated on, but if he refused to sit on the tub it might excite suspicion; and so thinking that he would yet get a chance to change places with him, he at length decided to take a seat.

"Now, then, let's have 'Walking for Dat Cake,'" said Dick, adjusting his bones.

"All right; go fo' dat cake," said Ebenezer, striking up the tune.

They played and sang it very well, and before long Eben began to get warmed up, and to put in some extra licks.

This was just what Dick wanted him to do, for playing on a banjo would almost take him off his feet any time.

They played and sang several tunes.

"Now, then, let's try 'Up in a Balloon;' the one we sang the other night," said Dick.

"Go it! Brung on yer gas!" replied Ebenezer, rattling away at that once popular tune.

He closed his eyes in a sort of ecstasy, and Dick stooped down and lighted the end of the fuse with the fire on his segar.

Eben did not observe him; for just as he sent it off, he struck off with:

"Up in a balloon, boys,
Up in a balloon,
All among the little stars,
Sailing 'round the moon."

As they finished the verse, there was an explosion; a dull thud; a big puff of smoke, and Ebenezer Crow went shooting upward with a yell.

The banjo went in one direction, and the tub in another, and the explosion even knocked Dick head over heels.

Ebenezer must have gone up about fifty feet, and he would have been a dead nigger sure had he not landed in the top of a tree which broke his fall and allowed him to tumble into the duck-pond without any great bodily harm.

But there never was such another badly frightened coon that ever lived, and to tell the truth, Eben thought he was dead.

Dick himself was slightly stunned.

"Whoa, dar! Whoa! Stop her. Oh, Lord!" cried Eben, as he arose to the surface and got on his feet again, and with many grunts and lamentations waddled to the shore.

"Where have you been, Eben?" asked Dick, recovering his presence of mind.

"Oh, Lord, been at def's gate!" he groaned, as he shook the mud and water from his person.

"Been 'up in a balloon,' I guess."

"Oh, Lord!" and he sank down on the ground, almost exhausted.

"What was it?"

"Oh, Lord!" was all he would say.

Just then Mrs. Plunket, the cook, and in fact the whole family came running out. They had heard the strange, dull explosion, and the cook

had seen Eben rising up over the stable like a spread eagle.

"What has happened?" demanded Mrs. Plunket.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Eben.

"What is it, Richard?"

"Blow me if I'll ever tell you, mammy. We were playing away here when all of a sudden there was some sort of a burst and Eben went sailing up among the tree tops and I was knocked over."

"Why, mercy on us, what does it mean?"

"Ask Eben," said Dick, with a grin.

"Ebenezer, are you hurt?"

"Yas, missus, I's all broke up," said he, mournfully.

"But what was it?"

"Oh, Lord! I 'spect it war an earthquake."

"An earthquake? What nonsense."

"Don't see no nonsense 'bout it, missus."

"Where did you get all that water and mud that is on your face and clothes?"

"In de duck pond, missus," he moaned.

"But how came you there?"

"I fall down. Oh, Lord!"

"Are you badly hurt?"

"I 'spect dat I's on my def bed."

"But either one of you must know something about the affair. How and what was it, Richard?"

"Well, it looks as though there had been some powder burned here," said he, pointing to the place where the tub had formerly stood.

"Mercy on me, what mischief next? Richard Plunket, I am just as certain that you know something about this as I am that you will come to a bad end," said his mother.

"Of course he does," put in his sister.

"I don't know any more about it than my dog does. Where did I get any powder?"

Ebenezer had, in the meantime, struggled to his feet, and made his way into the stable to lie down.

Dick picked up the banjo and followed him, while the folks returned to the house, puzzled almost out of their wits over the affair.

"How do you feel now?" asked Dick, as he entered the stable.

"Oh, Lord! An' dar am my libery all spoil," said he, rising up and taking a look at himself.

"Livery! Well, I should say you ought to be very thankful if you get off with nothing worse than that. You have no bones broken, I guess."

"Don't know, Dicky. Can't tell much 'bout myself. I's all broke up."

"Powder is a dangerous thing."

Ebenezer rolled his big eyes at him.

"Especially when there is a fuse lying around where people are smoking."

That settled it, and Ebenezer knew that his little job had been discovered and turned on him.

It was lucky that it was played on him instead of little Dick, for that charge of powder would have shot him up like a rocket and undoubtedly killed him.

Ebenezer shuddered as he thought of it, and he also thought that it served him right, although it had served him exceedingly rough.

"Up in a balloon, boys,"

Dick began to sing.

"Oh, don't do dat, Dicky. I's sick," said he again lying down.

"But only think how sick I should have been had I been on that tub instead of you."

"Don't spoke ter me now, Dicky."

"That was the way you was going to get square with me, was it?"

"Dicky, I tole you dat I's drefful sick man. Go 'way an' don't bodder me, dere's a good boy," said he, in a most mournful tone of voice.

"All right, but I've got you now just where I wanted you. I can have you arrested any time I like for attempted murder; so look out."

"Oh, Dicky, I's sick."

"Well, I should think you would be. But you are not half so sick as you will be."

"Don't be hard wid me, chile, fo' I'm shuah dat I am n't gwine fo' ter lib long."

"Oh, yes, you will. Nothing the matter with you. Only shook up a bit, that's all."

"Don't say nuffin' 'bout it, Dicky, an' I'll be de bes' frien' you eber had."

"Oh, yes, you're a healthy friend, arn't you?"

"Dicky, you don't understand me."

"But I think I do, though."

"Dick, I put dat powder dar fo' ter kill rats, an' you mus' hab drop some fire on it."

"Rats! Well, you got caught in your own rat trap, didn't you?" said Dick, laughing.

"It war all an accident, chile."

"Yes, I know it was. Funny, wasn't it?"

"Dicky, you is too hard on me. I's all racked ter pieces. Lemme be, an' I tole you all 'bout it bimeby."

Dick laughed, and went into the house.

The first one he told it to was Miss Brown, the cook, and together they laughed so long and so heartily over it that his mother and sister went to the kitchen to learn what new thing had broken out, and then, with the tears streaming from his mischievous eyes from laughter, he told them the whole story.

It was a shocking thing, but to save their lives they could not help laughing at it. Ebenezer heard them, as he lay there in the stable grunting, and he knew that the whole thing had been given away.

But little he cared, for he was the sickest darkie in Long Branch, by long odds, and had he not felt so completely used up, he would have clubbed himself all around the place.

"De debil has got me in tow fo' suah," he mused. "He am down on me an' a good fren' to dat rascally little Dicky. He allus gits de best ob me, an' I neber try ter get-squar wid him no mo'."

He lay there for an hour or more, cursing his luck and trying to recover himself. Finally he crawled out and washed himself in the horse trough, and got some of the dirt off his clothes.

But he wasn't seen in the house that day, and at night he slept in the hay out in the stable.

He had to face the music, however, sooner or later, and feeling rather hungry the next morning he went to the kitchen for his breakfast, and there his other torment, the cook, went for him right sharp.

She laughed at and rigged him unmercifully, but he made no reply at all, and got out to the stable again as soon as possible, leaving her to wait at the table.

During the forenoon Mrs. Plunket sent for him for the purpose of reproving him, but he stuck to the story he had told Dick about killing rats, and did it so earnestly, that she was half inclined to believe him.

After a week or so the matter wore away, and Ebenezer, although somewhat sober, began to be himself again. But Dick could take the starch right out of him at any time by simply singing: "Up in a balloon, boys."

Ebenezer Crow was a cured coon, however, so far as thinking about getting square with Dick was concerned, and during the next few weeks he paid sober attention to business.

But you may be assured that Dick did not let up on him, or have any idea of doing so, for he was a perfect bonanza of fun to him; he would have been as lonesome as a stolen pup without his Ebenezer.

The next snap that he played on him was not an intentional one, but Dick could work a racket whether it was put-up, or came on the spur of the moment.

Ebenezer could handle a pair of oars pretty well, and Dick, for a purpose, had flattered him into the belief that he was equal to Josh Ward any time, and that purpose was to make him willing to take him out rowing every now and then.

One afternoon when the sun was not shining, he induced him to give Rose and him a pull on the river, and he gladly agreed to it.

The river was some distance from the cottage, but, for the sake of the sail, they would drive to the landing, put up the team, and then go out for a spin, with fat Ebenezer at the oars.

"Only notice that stroke!" he said, on this occasion, addressing his sister. "Talk about your Yale or Oxford stroke. Look at that!"

This would make the darkey grin like a Cheshire cat, and bend every ounce of his mutton upon the oars.

"Get up to forty a minute; you can do it," he said, confidently.

"Don't know 'bout dat. Pretty warm work fo' forty," said he, while the perspiration poured down his shiny mug.

"Yes, you can. Just show Rose what you can do," and Eben worked like a steam engine.

After rowing them for four or five miles up the river, he rowed them back again to the wharf.

And here was where the fun began.

The tide was down, so that it was at least four feet from the boat to the top of the wharf, and after bringing the boat bow up, Ebenezer laid down the oars, and got up for the purpose of catching the string-piece and bringing the little craft up alongside.

Dick took one of the oars, as if to assist him.

Ebenezer stood on the bow and grasped the string-piece, but just as he reached it, Dick pushed the boat back three or four feet, leaving the fat darkey with the tips of his toes on the

boat, and the tips of his fingers on the edge of the wharf.

And wasn't he a comical looking coon, as he yelled, humped his back, holding on for dear life, and tried to recover himself, and get the boat back again!

"Hole on, dar! What you do?" he cried.

"What are you doing? I should say you was the one to hold on," said Dick.

"Pusher up!"

"How can I push her up? Pull her up, you."

"I—I can't! Quick, or I fall in!"

"Get back into the boat again, why don't you?"

"I can't."

"Then get up on the dock."

"I can't do dat, either."

"Well, what are you going to do—stay there all night?"

"Took c'ar, dar!" he yelled, and the next instant he fell splash into the water like a big log.

Rose screamed and Dick laughed, of course. But she was not aware that he had done the mischief.

"Quick, save him!" said she.

"Oh, he can swim like a duck."

"Can he? Well, that's a good duck-in' at all events."

At that moment Ebenezer came to the surface, puffing and blowing like a whale.

"Didn't I tole yer fo' ter look out?" said he.

"Well, I did look out while you looked in. Now, swim out. I'll save your hat while you save your bacon," said Dick.

Ebenezer wanted to swear, but had so little wind and so much water aboard that he could not, and so he struck out for the shore, while Dick drew the boat up in a better place, and assisted his sister out.

Poor Eben; he was a solemn-looking coon when he reached the shore.

Dick and Rose went to meet him.

"That's right, old man; always 'swim out' when you get in over your head."

"Dicky, I somehow fink dat you know somfin' 'bout dat job."

"Well, yes, I saw it done, and you made a very neat job of it, too," said he, laughing.

"You is a bad egg, Dicky."

"What a pity we haven't got a wringing machine here to put you through."

"I's had plenty ob you foolishness," said he, putting on his dripping hat.

"Well, we're satisfied with the fun we have had out of it, so now we'll drive home."

The carriage was then in waiting, and groutily did Ebenezer mount the box, while Dick and his sister got in and closed the door.

"If I only know dat he play dat on me, I broke him all ter pieces!" muttered Eben, as he drove homeward.

CHAPTER XI.

"RICHARD PLUNKET, if you don't stop playing your pranks on Ebenezer, I shall certainly take you in hand and punish you."

"Ah right, mammy," replied mischievous Dick.

"Your whole earthly delight seems to be to play practical jokes on him, and I will not have it. You bother him about his duties, and cause all sorts of annoyances."

"But you know it wasn't my fault about the boat business, and his ducking in the river."

"I do not know it."

"Ask Rose."

"I have asked her, and she more than half suspects that you caused it."

"Well, Ebenezer don't, at any rate."

"Never mind about what has been; only see that you behave yourself in the future and let him alone."

"All right, mammy."

And that settled it—for about the fortieth time.

The scolding had resulted from the last trick that the young scamp had played on Ebenezer Crow, the one by which he received a ducking in the river, and which Eben more than half suspected that he was the sly cause of.

But not being sure of it, the fat darkey became good natured as he got dry, and the following day he was all right again, so far as Dick was concerned, and would have been so with everybody had it not been for the cook, Miss Brown, who appeared to take as much delight in teasing her would-be lover as Dick did himself.

"Did you find it moist, down dar?" she asked, as they were eating their supper, in company with the other servants.

But Eben refused to answer her.

"Putty heavy kind ob a dew down dar by de ribber, wan't dar?" she continued.

"Miss Assafidity Brown," said he, laying down his knife and fork and looking at her severely enough to break up a setting hen, "de bes' fing fo' you future well-faring am de mindin' ob you own business. After de conclusions dat hab taken place atween us, I wish it constinctly conduced in your mind dat I feels myself above you, and dat I refuse to hab any mo' articulation wid you."

The cook and her companions seemed entirely overcome by this eloquent rebuke.

"Oh—oh—oh! Bring de cologne; I's gwine fo' ter faint," said the cook.

"Better take a squirt ob peppersass."

"No; you am too sharp fo' me. Don't want no peppersass; 'long wid you. War you get all dat dictionary?"

"Troth, I think he's been fadin' on Grake roors," suggested the chambermaid.

"Ladies, I hab de extreme felicitization ob v'shin' you a berry good-ebenin'," said he, rising with much dignity, and leaving the room.

Another loud laugh followed him.

"Leave us a lock of your hair!"

"Swim out; you're in too deep!"

"Go dive for oysters!" and other complimentary calls and suggestions were sounded.

But Eben pretended not to hear them, and soon after joined Dick, who was playing on his bones out on the lawn.

"Whew! It am hot!" said Eben.

"Yes; and a chap can't do much better than to get right down to his 'bones,' as I am. What were the girls laughing at? Chaffing you?"

"I jus' gib dat cook a piece ob my mind, you bet," said he, shaking his woolly head.

"Bah! what's the use of your fighting? She is all gone on you, just as you are on her," said Dick.

"Oh, don't bodder me, chile."

"I'll bet a house and lot against a second-hand postage stamp that you and she will be married in less than a year."

"Go 'way, chile. Squit you' foolin'."

"I'm not fooling. I heard mammy say the other day that she thought you would make a good couple, and that the girl loved you."

"Did you heah her say dat, Dicky?" he asked, with considerable animation.

"Of course I did."

"No—no, Dicky. She hab got too much ob debiltrum in her fo' me," and he sighed like a steam-boat.

"Nonsense! women always plague the fellow they like. Just you keep cool and the old thing will work itself."

Ebenezer made no reply, and Dick continued to rattle away on his bones. It was plain enough to be seen that the fat coachman was in love with the pretty yellow cook, but she had played so many games on him that he felt very shy about saying anything more to her.

Mrs. Plunket's bell soon aroused him from his meditations, and Dick did not meet him again until the following day.

But Ebenezer was all the while trying to study up some trick to play on Dick; for his last great mistake had been forgotten, and he was anxious to appear quite as smart as he was, hoping, if he could only do so, to head the young fellow off, and make him more cautious about how he played tricks on him.

And one day, not long afterwards, he did succeed in playing quite a clever trick on the lad.

About noon each day it was one of Ebenezer's duties to make an urn full of lemonade for the family and guests, and to serve it to them on the piazza or in the arbor.

On this occasion Dick was in the arbor reading, while the other members of the family were gathered on the vine-shaded piazza. Eben served them first, and then carried a huge goblet out to Dick.

"Halloo, Sneezer! Good for you; for I'm awfully thirsty," said he, observing the lemonade.

"I should say dat it am good fo' you, Dicky, if you am dry," said Eben, with a big grin.

"Well, I guess that's so. Got it good and sweet?"

"'Bout right, I 'spect," he said, handing it to him.

"Oh—bah!" said he, tasting it.

"What am de matter?"

"Why, you haven't sweetened it at all. Take it back, and make it twice as sweet."

"I go bring de sugar bowl out, an' luf you sweeten him yourself," said Eben, setting down the tray, and starting for the house.

Dick resumed his reading, and his dog Nip resumed his nap at his feet.

Now here is where Ebenezer's little joke worked in, and this is how it was:

He had purposely made Dick's drink apart from the others, and had not sweetened it at all, although he knew that he liked it sweeter than anybody else; and in order to carry out his joke, he had procured a bowl full of white sand, so closely resembling sugar that a person could not tell the difference without tasting it.

With the sand in the sugar bowl, he returned to the arbor where Dick was waiting.

He put a few spoonful into the goblet, and went through the farce of stirring it up, after which he handed it to him to drink.

"Why, confound you, this isn't a particle sweeter than it was before," said Dick, tasting of it.

"Pears ter me dat you toof am berry sweet tar-day, Dicky."

"Why, I tell you it is as sour as lemon juice."

"All right. Dar am de sugar bowl; sweeten it ter suit yourself."

Dick shovelled in a lot more of the sand, and stirred it for some time, after which he tasted it again.

"Pshaw! Guess there isn't much sweet in that sugar anyway," said he, taking some more.

"It am de bleached kind."

"Bleached! I should say so. All the sweetness bleached out of it. Now, then," and again he lifted it to his lips.

Ebenezer's mouth was so far agape that he could hardly ask him how he liked it then.

"Confound such sugar. There isn't a bit of sweet in it," and he took some more of the sand.

Eben felt as though he was about to explode.

Once more did Dick taste of the lemonade and make up a wry face at it.

"Well, I'll be hanged," he muttered.

Then he took up some of the sand in a spoon and put it into his mouth.

"Yah—yah—yah! oh! yah—yah—yah!" roared Ebenezer, opening his mouth wide enough to drive a hog into, and wiggling himself into all sorts of contortions.

Dick tumbled in an instant.

"Sold, by golly! Sold an' got de 'soap!'" Eben cried.

"Yes, but you haven't got the 'sugar,'" said Dick.

"Dat yer am de bes' dat eber war. Oh, by golly! oh—oh! I broke myself all ter pieces laughing."

Dick hadn't much if anything to say. He saw the point of the joke and acknowledged it like a man.

"How you like dat sugar?" and again did he roar and shake himself.

"Well, Eben, it wasn't a very sweet sell, but it was a good one, nevertheless. I owe you one."

"Nebber mind 'bout paying it, Dicky, I makes you a present ob it. Dat go fo' ter pay some ob dem dat I owe you."

"All right. I own up. You had me."

"Oh, by golly, dat war fus'rate."

"Yes, but the joke don't quench my thirst."

"Yah—yah—yah! Dat am so, I guess. All right. I go fo' some mo'," and away he went, all the while with the top of his head almost over on his back, and brought a goblet of lemonade that was all right.

Dick drank it in silence and thought at the same time what game he should play to get square with the sable joker—while Ebenezer still shook his fat belly and wondered if he couldn't play the same joke on the cook in some way.

Well, that lasted him all the remainder of the day for laughing material, and that evening he really did manage to play almost the same joke on Miss Brown, by artfully substituting the bowl of sand for the sugar bowl.

She and the other servants "sweetened" their tea and kept stirring it, but still it was unsatisfactory, and it was not until each of them had filled their cups nearly full of the sand that they discovered it.

"Dat war you doings, Ebenezer Crow," said the cook, the moment she found it was sand instead of sugar. "Tink you mighty smart, don't yer?"

"What'er matter wid you?" he asked, trying to look as honest as a cow.

"All right fo' you. I make you eat dat sand afo' I gets done wid you, see? I don't."

"I spect dat war Dick."

"Don't 'spose dat he am such a big fool like you. Guess not. But all right. I get squar wid you."

"Don't see what I's done. Guess you tried fo' ter play a snap on me. I got it, too," and so he had, which caused them all to doubt whether he had really played the trick or not.

But the cook felt satisfied that he had, and so she "had it in for him."

A day or two after that, Dick took him in hand for a little racket.

"I say, Sneezzer, do you like watermelons?" he asked, well knowing what the answer would be.

"Do I like 'em! Dicky, do a cat lub a warm brick? Do a flea lub a dog's back?"

"Well, I guess so," replied Dick, calmly.

"Waal, I also guess dat I lub watermillions. Oh—oh! Maybe not!"

"I know where there are some beauties, all ripe."

"In de market?"

"No; but they are all ready for the market, though they are still on the vines. It is only about half a mile from here, and what do you say to scooping in a couple of them to-night?"

"By golly, Dicky, I—I don't mind if I do," said he, glancing around to see if they were observed.

"Or we can go just before dark, for the farmers don't live within a mile of the patch, and all we have to do is to gather them in. See?"

"Dicky, I am your grasshopper."

"Good enough! We'll get a pair of darlings, and have a bully old time."

"Yum-yum-yum," said Eben, smacking his lips as he went about his chores.

Now Dick was really in earnest about getting those watermelons. He was very fond of them when they were fresh, and having discovered them the day before, he concluded that they were much better than any he could buy, and besides, "stolen fruit is always sweet," and the little excitement and adventure in getting them would make them taste all the better.

How many a fellow, amply able to buy all the watermelons he wanted, has preferred to "capture" them rather than buy them?

Captured watermelons or fruit are like stolen kisses, all the better because they are so.

That afternoon about five o'clock they started down the road in the direction of the watermelon patch, bent on having all they wanted.

Ebenezer was never so happy in his life, for whenever Dick would manage to get him excused from his duties and take him away, nothing pleased him better.

After walking about half an hour they came to the field where Dick had seen the watermelons.

In fact, there appeared to be two fields, both of which were thick with ripe and luscious melons, and a partition fence divided them.

They got out of sight and viewed the promised land; Ebenezer was in ecstasies.

"Dar am de lan' dat flows wid milk an' watermelons," said he.

"Where do you find the milk?" asked Dick.

"Don't you see dem cows ober dar?"

"That's so. But, come, there is nobody in sight. Let's take a walk and see what we can find."

"Call you grasshopper, Dicky," said he, leaping up.

"Come on."

They started down through the field. On every side there were hundreds of watermelons, great green and white beauties, ripe, and almost vocal with the invitation, "come and take us."

They didn't wait to be invited more than once, and before going many rods they each fell in love with a big one and speedily captured it.

But, as there is no rose without a thorn, there is no watermelon without a dog.

Dick was the first to make the discovery that a big dog had discovered them and was coming to enter his protest, teeth and things.

The little rascal never said a word to his dusky companion in crime, but dropping his melon, while Eben was out of sight behind some stalks, he lit out of that field on the double, leaving Eben to do the best he could.

A warning bark from the dog admonished him, and catching up the big watermelon he had selected, he started for the fence as hard as he could go.

"Hoe it legs or die tail-piece!" said he.

He had just time to reach the fence and to mount it before the dog was upon him.

But after he had reached a perch of safety, as he thought, a new danger stood in waiting for him, in the shape of another dog quite as large, belonging to the farmer owning the lot on the other side.

"Go 'way! What yer foolin' 'round heah fo'?" he asked, as he balanced himself and his watermelon on the top rail of the fence so as to keep the dogs on either side from sampling his legs.

But the dogs meant business, and it took all his time to keep his balance, his melon, and his shins out of danger.

"Dicky, whar am yer?" he called, but the young rascal made no reply. "Wonder whar he

am gone? Go 'way dar! What's de matter wid yer? Poor doggy! Nice doggy! Did'er 'buse 'em?" he asked, soothingly.

But those dogs were not to be humbugged by any pretended sympathy on account of their being dogs. They didn't feel "'bused" a cent's worth, but they did want to 'buse that black watermelon thief.

And they tried to get at him. They barked and jumped up at his legs, while he stood up on the top rail and balanced himself with the greatest difficulty so as to be out of their reach.

"Dicky, whar am yer?" he moaned. "Come heah, Dicky, an' call off de dogs."

But Dick was out of harm's way, and being where he could see all that was going on, he was laughing as though ready to split at the comical sight which Ebenezer presented there on his uneasy perch.

"Go 'way dar, you big fools. Take your old watermillion—who wants it!" he added, pitching his melon at one of the dogs, which only made them bark and jump around all the fiercer.

"Makin' mighty big fuss 'bout one ole nasty watermillion. Wouldn't take de gift of it," he cried, addressing the dogs.

Just then the owners of the two different fields (who, by-the-by, were bitter enemies) came up, each armed with a loaded shot gun.

"Now see what fools you make ob yourselves. Go to work and make such a fuss dat you raise all de neighbors. An' dey will fill me full ob bird sht fo' certain. Oh, Lord! whar am dat Dicky dat got me inter dis yer scrape. Wonder if dey will boff fire me full ob lead? Hole on dar!" he cried, to one of the men.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"And what are you doing in my watermelon patch?" demanded the other.

"Gemmen, dar am a mistake," said Eben.

"Yes, I guess there is. You have been stealing."

"Me! Gemmen, I am a member of good sciety. Call away dem yer dogs an' I tole yer all 'bout it."

"You are a watermelon thief."

"Dar am whar you make a mistake. I am de private coachman fo' Mrs. Plunket down heah at de cottage. She sen' me fo' de doctor, an' I try to cut across lots, and heah I am, atween two fires an' two dogs. Luf me go, gemmen, fo' dar am a sick chile waitin' fo' de doctor."

"All right; go ahead," said the one on his right, at the same time cuffing off his dog.

Ebenezer was profuse in his thanks as he got down from his uneasy perch, but no sooner did the dogs find their game released than they sprang at each other through the fence (although neither of them could get entirely through, and had to be content with biting and gnawing each other's heads), which instantly brought the owners at each other.

Ebenezer Crow didn't want to hear the arguments made either by the dogs or their owners. He got up and got out of that the fastest he knew how, but not fast enough to escape a charge of bird shot, which one of the farmers fired at the other in their fight.

He never stopped until he reached the cottage, and never once saw Dick, who was keeping along behind him and enjoying the fun hugely.

Rushing all breathlessly into the stable, he began to strip for the purpose of seeing if he was bleeding to death, and how many shots he had taken home with him.

"By golly, I know dat I'se all shot ter pieces," he moaned. "I guess dar am 'bout two pounds ob lead in my body. Oh, Lord! whar am Dicky?"

Just then Dick entered the stable.

"Halloo, Sneezzer, did you escape?" he asked, eagerly.

"Oh, Dicky, am dat you?" he asked, mournfully.

"Of course it is."

"How you get away?"

"On my feet."

"Did de dogs go fo' you?"

"Only four of them."

"Dey bite you?"

"Not much. You see I got through the fence, and shut them all out. How are you?"

"All full ob lead, Dicky. Guess you better send fo' de doctor."

"Did they shoot you?"

"Fired nineteen charges inter me, Dicky."

"Nineteen!"

"An' I hab got lead 'nough in me ter plumb a house wid."

"Well, in that case, the best thing you can do is to sell yourself for old junk."

"Oh, Dicky, don't talk dat way."

"Get eight cents a pound for yourself."
 "Oh, Dicky, my heart am broke. Why didn't you stay an' share de glory?"
 "Glory! lead, you mean."
 "Am I bleeding much behind dar?" he asked, pulling up his shirt and showing his back.
 "Not a drop."
 "Dat's cos de shot fill de holes all up full."
 "Oh, you're all right. The skin is only broken in a few places. All you want is to bathe it in some lemon juice, and it will heal up in a few hours."
 "Am you shuah, Dicky?" he asked, anxiously.
 "Of course I am. I'll get you some lemons," and he started for the kitchen.

Then he gave it away to the cook, and got three or four lemons from her, after which he returned to the stable, while the servants crept out under cover of the darkness to see and hear. They couldn't see much at first, but it wasn't long before they could hear without ear trumpets, for the moment he began to rub his wounds with the lemon juice, he commenced to howl and dance with pain, skipping around the stable, all naked as he was, and raising a terrible racket generally.

The servant girls gathered around the stable, and even the family became alarmed at his yells, and also rushed out to see what the matter was, for the dog was barking, and the horses were dancing about in their stalls.

Just as the women folks had got near the stable, Ebenezer, unable to stand the smarting occasioned by the lemon juice, came rushing out of the stable in a state of absolute nudity, and throwing himself upon the ground, he began to roll over like a dog.

Then there was an awful fluttering of petticoats and screaming, as the women ran back to the house. But Eben wasn't thinking about propriety just then, and after rolling a few minutes he got up and made a running jump into the duck pond, the mud and water of which soon soothed his pain entirely, and he returned to the stable and his clothes.

Of course the affair created the wildest excitement at the cottage, for they all believed him crazy.

But Ebenezer never gave it away. He knew it was a bad scrape, and that Dick had led him into it, and from that day he soured on water-melons—especially stolen ones.

CHAPTER XII.

A FEW days after the events narrated in the last chapter, Ebenezer bought himself a pair of big top-boots, especially for rainy weather and for fishing, a sport he was trying hard to get fond of, because it was fashionable.

And it must be remembered that he was fast becoming quite swell in his ideas, and could sling big dictionary words around without regard to rhyme or reason. But he couldn't shake himself in spite of all that he could do, and the new ideas that he got into his head only made him all the more comical.

He had noticed that several swell drivers at Long Branch had these big top-boots, so nothing would satisfy him short of a pair of the same sort; and when he got them he felt as big as a dog with two tails.

And weren't they old gunboats, though! He found it just possible to get his feet into the largest pair there was for sale, and now he longed for an opportunity to wear them in public.

"How 'bout dem yer, Dicky?" he asked, showing them to the young fellow.

"How about them? Where were they built?" asked Dick, seriously.

"How dat?"

"Were they built in a ship-yard and launched?"

"Go way, dar, chile; wha' yer foolin' 'bout?"

"Well, you don't pretend to say that they were built in a regular factory, do you?"

"Corse dey war."

"They must have had a steam-boat boiler and smoke chimney for a last, then," said Dick, laughing.

"Squit yer foolin', Dicky. Dem's de bes' in de market."

"And the largest."

"Wait 'til yer see me get inside of 'em some time."

"Well, I should say there was plenty room enough for you to get in and be entirely out of sight."

"Oh, go 'long!" said he, turning away to answer Mrs. Plunket's bell.

"If I don't put up a job on them boots, I hope to be kicked with them," muttered Dick.

Miss Assadity Brown, the cook, also had a good laugh over Eben's boots, and that afternoon, when he took them into the kitchen for the purpose of greasing them, so as to have them all ready for use, she blackguarded him roundly about his flat boots.

"Wha' yer 'spect? Dat dar am soap-fat 'nough in der house fo' to go all ober dem scows? Bime-by you'll want ter grease de barn," said she.

"Wat am de matter wid you, honey? I don't call dat a large-sized bug-masher," said he, holding up one of the boots.

"Big 'nough fo' a hen-coop."

"Don't b'lieve dat you can any mo'n get 'em on."

"Nonsense! I could keep house in one of dem yer railroad tunnels," she said, kicking at one of the boots.

"Wish dat yer would come an' keep house wid me in bof of 'em," said he, with a big but tender grin.

"Go 'way wid yer nonsense, or I gib you anoder of dem yer bouquets."

"Oh, honey, you is bad to me."

"Go on wid your boat-greasin'."

Eben knew that was the best thing to do, and he knew that he had a big job before him.

So he began to go over them with a greased rag, and the cook went about her affairs.

Ebenezer worked away, singing, meantime:

"De cook she lub a soap-fat man,
 An' she feed him wid cold grub,
 So ebry day dat soap-fat man
 He swore to her his lub:
 She gib him all her money,
 Housekeepin' fo' to go, honey,
 But he took her cash an' 'way he ran,
 Away to de debil went de soap-fat man."

After finishing the greasing of his boots, he placed them behind the stove to dry, and then went about his business.

The cook, left alone, soon forgot all about the big scows, as she called them, and went cheerfully singing about her work.

But Dick Plunket didn't forget them.

Not overmuch.

He wasn't apt to forget anything that had any fun in it.

He had just returned from town, where he had procured some shoemaker's wax which he made into pills about the size of a pea.

He soon discovered the boots, and while no one was looking, he placed about a dozen of them in each boot, and then went carelessly away just as though he had done nothing at all.

The heat of the stove soon made the wax so soft that each pellet stuck to the inner sole just where he had placed them, and his idea was, that when Ebenezer put the boots on he would have mighty hard work to get them off again.

And so he probably would have had, but things didn't work exactly that way.

In the afternoon while the other two servants were in the kitchen, the conversation turned upon Ebenezer's big new boots, and all sorts of jokes were hurled at them, as they stood there drying.

"Faith, they'd make good life-boats," said one of the daughters of Erin.

"Sure, if thev'd hould wather they'd make good cisterns," said another.

"An' dat big fool nigger, he say dat I couldn't get 'em on my feet," said the cook.

"Be jabers, but ye cud get both futs inter the wan of them, so yer cud."

"By golly, gals, I se a great mind ter put 'em on, an' see how they fit," said she, mischievously.

"Try 'em."

"Yis, do, an' give us a jig in 'em."

"Golly, wouldn't dat be fun? I'll do it!" saying which, she took the boots, and pulling her dress well up, proceeded to put them on.

Now it must be remembered that Miss Brown did not "stand on trifles," as the saying is, for there was a good deal of her person on the ground when she stood up. That is to say, that she had big feet; consequently, on account of not having taken her own boots off, her feet filled Ebenezer's boots quite full.

"Oh, by golly, I se lost in 'em!" said she, getting into a standing position. "Whoa, Emma!"

"Begorra, but the best thing ye can do is ter go out killing pratie bugs," said one of the girls.

"Give us a jig," said the other.

"Oh, golly! how am dat?" and she began moving those huge leather trunks up and down in a sort of a breakdown, but they were so big and heavy that she could do but little else than make a great noise on the kitchen floor.

This tickled the other girls hugely, and their laughing, together with the cook's dancing, soon brought Mrs. Plunket into the room.

"What are you doing here, cook? You disturb the whole house with your noise."

"Well, Mrs. Plunket, I begs yer pardon, but I war tryin' fo' ter dance a breakdown in Eben's new boots," said the girl, laughing, and at the same time lifting up her dress high enough to show all the cowhide in Eben's property.

"Well, you look nice, don't you? Cook, I am astonished at you. Take those boots right off and don't let me know of your doing such a thing again," said Mrs. Plunket, going from the room.

"Ob cose I's gwine fo' ter took 'em off. Don't s'pose dot I kalkerlates ter wear 'em, do yer?" she said, as soon as her mistress had gone.

"Sure, she don't want us ter have a bit of fun," growled one of the girls.

Meantime the cook was trying to get out of the boots. But the wax was doing its duty, and her own boot was stuck as firmly inside of the big one as it would have been had it grown there.

She tried first one and then the other, but neither of them would budge a hair's breadth.

"Are ye stuck in 'em?"

"Golly, dey don't seem fo' ter come off bery easy; catch hole ob 'em an' help me," said she, lifting one of them up.

The chambermaid took hold of it by the heel and toe, and attempted to pull it off; but being still greasy, her hands slipped off, and she sat suddenly down on the floor with a bang.

"Bad luck ter yer big feet," she growled, getting slowly up, and feeling to see if she had smashed her bustle.

Then the other girl tried with no better success, and Miss Brown began to look serious.

In fact, it was really a serious situation, and so she got up and tried various ways to remove those huge boots; but all in vain. They would not budge.

"Fut the devil's the matter wid 'em, ony-how?"

"Fo' de Lord, chile, I'd jes' like fo' ter know dat myself. Dey went on good 'nuff. Both, ob yer git hole ob de one boot, an' try again," said she, sitting down on the the floor, and sticking up one of the boots.

They both took hold of it, and hung on as they pulled with all their might. This was the means of pulling her all around the kitchen floor; but the boot did not come off a particle.

While this was going on, Dick entered the room, and both of the Irish girls flew to drive him out.

But the sight he obtained a glimpse of convinced him that his trap had caught the wrong game, although it would undoubtedly cause quite as much fun as if Ebenezer had been caught.

He went and told his mother, and she and two or three others went to the kitchen to see the fun.

There they found the poor bewildered cook in tears and the lowest depths of despondency. But there was no need of asking why the boots would not come off; they would not, and that settled it.

Dick also tried to pull them off, but with no better success.

"Send to the stable for Ebenezer," said Mrs. Plunket.

"Oh, no—no!" screamed the cook.

"But what are you going to do, foolish girl?"

"Dear me; I don't know. Don't say anythin' 'bout it ter Eben, an' I'll get out ob 'em soon."

Everybody laughed, with the exception of the cook, and she felt like crying.

Presently Ebenezer came in.

"Whar am dem boots?" he asked, missing them.

"I haven't had them, so you needn't look at me so suspiciously," said Dick.

"Miss Brown, whar am dem boots?" he asked, turning sharply upon her.

"Go 'way, an' mind you own business; dat's all dat I wants you ter do," she snapped.

"Miss Brown, dem boots, if yer please."

"Go 'way, I tole yer!" she screamed.

"An' I tole yer dat I want dem boots."

"Go get 'em, den; who cares?"

She was sitting so as to cover them up with her dress; but the curious expression on every face present convinced him that there was something up. And so there was; up altogether too high.

"Nonsense; you may as well acknowledge your foolishness, and let him assist you in pulling them off," said Mrs. Plunket.

"What!" exclaimed Ebenezer.

The next instant the cook gave a scream, and started for up stairs, but the noise she made sounded as though somebody was jumping a pair of Saratoga trunks up stairs.

The others broke into a hearty laugh, with the

exception of Ebenezer, who was so completely taken aback that he hardly knew what to do.

No more did the cook.

She did not show up again that day, but slept in Eben's boots all night, not being able to get out of them, while he was trying to get it through his woolly head whether he would get a chance to pull them off or not.

But the cook settled the question the next day by cutting the boots down the leg from top to bottom, laying them wide open, and ruining them, of course, but freeing herself from the bondage in which she had been kept so long.

She offered to pay for the boots at first, but when the wax was found in them she instantly suspected that Eben had played a trick on her, and she nearly broke his head with one of the ruined brogues.

But Dick had his laugh out of the affair if nobody else did. It was too good a joke, however, to keep all to himself, so he told his sister, and she told several of the visitors, until it became a subject for laughter and conversation, not only at Mrs. Plunket's cottage, but at several in the neighborhood.

Ebenezer, however, did not hear of it for a long time, neither did the cook, and on that account they continued to be bitter enemies.

But this was not a very strange state of things for them. They had been but little else than enemies since Ebenezer became a member of the family, and so each one attended to their business, and the world moved on just as though a pair of boots had not been ruined.

Dick was preparing to go fishing one day when Ebenezer encountered him.

"Gwine fishing, Dicky?" he asked, cheerfully.

"Yes; why?"

"Whar yer gwine?"

"On the water."

"Yah—yah—yah! I didn't 'spect dat yer war gwine ter fish on dry land," and he laughed as loud as a fog horn at his discovery. "Lemme go 'long wid yer, Dicky?"

"You can't catch any fish."

"Dicky, yer don't know me. I know a place down by de mouf ob de river whar dey say dar am halibut dat weigh 'bout fifty pound."

"Nonsense."

"Fact. Jim Dinkle, Mr. Buncher's servant, told me only yesterday dat he catch one dar dat weigh seventy-five pounds. I'll go borry his line if you luv me go 'long wid yer, Dicky," said he, coaxingly.

"All right; go ahead."

Ebenezer lost no time in getting ready, and together they started for the mouth of the Shrewsbury river, the great fishing locality for those who indulge in this sort of amusement around Long Branch.

Here they procured a boat, rowed out a short distance, and then anchored.

"Is this the place where they catch halibut?" asked Dick.

"Dis yer am de place, chile. Now, you fish high fo' de little fellers, an' I'll go down to de bottom fo' a big one," said he, baiting his big hook with about a pound of soft clams.

Taking a position in the bow of the boat, he threw over his line, and let it go to the bottom.

Dick, meanwhile, was fixing his small lines with thin, delicate snells, for he was quite an expert fisherman, and before they had been fishing five minutes he pulled in a fine bass.

"Dar he am! Hole on ter him, Dicky! Oh, by golly, he am a beauty!" exclaimed Ebenezer, springing up excitedly, and nearly upsetting the boat.

"You just look out, or you will make us both look in," said Dick.

"How dat?"

"Why, you nearly upset the boat."

"Am dat so?"

"Yes, it am; and between you and I, I don't care about a dip with my clothes on," said he, taking the fish from his hook.

"All right. Now I go fo' a big one," said he, sitting down in the boat.

It was not long before Dick pulled in another fine bass, and again did Ebenezer get excited about it, and nearly upset the boat.

"Confound you! will you attend to your big fish, and let my little ones alone?"

"Oh, but amn't he a darling?"

"Of course. Where is your halibut?"

"By golly! I almos' forgot all 'bout dat fish," said he, again taking his seat.

"How do you know but that you have had a bite?"

"Dicky, when one ob dem yer critters get a hold ob a hook, he almos' pull de boat under water. Golly! guess you know when he bite well 'nough."

"Well, don't get up again till you catch a fish," said Dick, throwing over his hook.

Ebenezer got right down to business now, and worked his hook up and down in order to attract the attention of any stray halibut that might be looking around for a free lunch.

Dick was paying quiet attention to the smaller fry, and after waiting for five or six minutes more, he hooked something and pulled it up.

It was an eel, about three feet long.

"By golly, dat am a bouncer!" said Eben.

"I should say it was a squirmer."

Did you ever catch an eel? If so, you know what a job it is to get them off the hook.

Dick tried for some time to get the hook out of the eel's mouth, but he was so powerful and squirmy that he could not do it.

"Help me, Sneezer. Catch hold around his neck, and hold him while I get the hook out," said he.

"All right."

Ebenezer knew about as much regarding eels as he did of Greek, but he had no idea of allowing Dick to think so, and responded quickly.

He grasped him several times without being able to hold him, but after several struggles he got him momentarily around the throat, and Dick removed the hook, leaving the eel in Eben's hand.

In the struggle he had bent over so that his head was nearly down to the eel's, and the moment it felt itself free from the hook, it began to raise the devil with renewed vigor.

"Hole on, dar—hole on, or I broke yer all up!" he exclaimed, still struggling with it.

"Let go; I've got my hook out. Put him down in the bottom of the boat," said Dick.

Whether he intended to do so or not cannot be known, but at all events, before he knew what to do or how to get out of the snarl, the eel took a twist, slipped from his grasp, and slid down his neck as quick as a flash.

"Oh—oh—oh! He's gone down my froat," said Eben, dancing with mad frenzy, and nearly tipping the boat over again.

"Hold on, confound you, hold on! You'll tip the boat over!" cried Dick.

"He am gone down my stomjack. Oh—oh—oh! Row ashore, Dicky, row ashore, an' get a stomach-pump!" cried Eben, in mortal anguish.

Dick laughed, and the darkey turned white.

"Row ashore, Dicky, do."

"Nonsense! You haven't swallowed it."

"Yes, I hab. I feels it down in my machinery."

"It must be inside of your shirt."

"Yes, an' inside ob my neck, too. I can feel him wriggling. Oh, row ashore, Dicky!" said he, most mournfully, at the same time grasping his bosom to keep the eel from going any further.

"Well, I thought you'd make a good eel-pot," replied Dick, laughing heartily.

"Oh, Dicky!"

"Sit down and unbutton your clothes."

"I tole yer he am inside ob my clus—I feels him wriggling down in my stomick."

"Unbutton your clothes, I tell you."

"He am killin' me, chile!"

"Well, I hope he will, if you don't do as I tell you."

"Dar he goes!" he exclaimed, making another frantic effort to stop the eel's slimy progress.

"You are a fool!"

"No, I's a dead man, Dicky."

"Unbutton your clothes, or I'll tip the boat over and let him swim away with you."

Eben proceeded cautiously to do as bidden, when out slipped the eel and wriggled away down in the bottom of the boat.

"There, you big idiot."

"Bress de Lord, I fort he war down 'mong my machinery fo' shuah!" said he.

"Now see if you can't keep quiet."

It was some time, however, before the frightened darkey could command himself, during which Dick pulled in several other fish, and Eben began to get discouraged.

Finally, however, when he went to pull up his line, he felt something on it—something heavy.

"By golly, Dicky, I hab cotech a halibut fo' shuah!" he exclaimed, leaping to his feet in great excitement.

"Well, pull him in."

"It am all bery well ter say pull him in, but he weigh 'bout a hundred pounds," said he, tugging away at his line but without being able to raise it much.

"Pull hard!"

Eben had by this time got away out on the bow of the boat, and was pulling with all his might; his hat falling overboard, and his eyes bulging out like two hard-boiled eggs, while the edge of the boat was nearly under water.

"By golly, he am a big one."

Dick was sitting back in the stern and trying to keep the boat from being upset.

Finally, seeing a good chance, he gave the boat a tilt, and Ebenezer turned almost a complete summersault and went into the water like a frog, still holding on his line.

Of course the boat instantly righted, and in the course of two minutes Eben came to the surface, puffing like a porpoise.

"Hang on to your line, and swim ashore!" cried Dick, the moment Eben appeared.

The darkey's mouth was too full of water to admit of his making any reply, but being without coat or hat, he unwound the remainder of his line and at once struck out for the shore, while Dick pulled up the anchor, and proceeded to follow him.

Fortunately it was a very long line, and the sunken root to which his hook was fastened, being now loosened, was more easily pulled along on the bottom.

The tide was down and that eager darkey soon reached the shore, where he began to pull again with all his might and main.

"I hab got him fo' shuah!" he cried, as he pulled.

"That's right. Land him!" cried Dick.

Ebenezer pulled like a sailor, hand over hand, until finally the root made its appearance.

Then there was a disgusted-looking darkey, and had it not been for his early education and good kicking up, he would undoubtedly have used some three-story cuss words.

"Goodness me! Wha' dat?" he asked.

"It looks more like a root than it does like a halibut," said Dick, laughing loudly. "Well—well, you are a healthy fisherman, arn't you? Fishing for firewood!"

It was nearly five minutes before he spoke, during which he stood there dripping and shivering.

"Dicky, I wants ter go home. Guess I warn't made for a fisherman," and sadly he proceeded to wind up his line and beg of Dick not to say anything about it, which he of course promised never to do.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT experience cured Ebenezer Crow of wanting to go fishing any more for halibut. He had a belly full of it, and dripping with wet, he started slowly and sadly back to the cottage.

Miss Assafidity Brown heard of it, of course, and she smiled for the first time since she got caught in Ebenezer's big boots.

"How'd I know wha'er had on my hook, eh?" he demanded, when she rigged him about it.

"Nobody but a fool nigger would pull heself oberboard, fish or no fish," said she.

"Nobody but fool nigger gal get inter pair big boots an' can't get out 'gain. Yah-yah-yah!"

"Mind yer business!" she snapped, for it was a sore spot with her.

"Thought you keep house in one ob dem boots all so fast, honey."

"Go 'long 'bout you own business."

"When you gwine fo' ter pay me fo' dem Shinderella's, sweetness?"

"I should say dey was Shinderella's."

"But dey got de bes' ob you Shinderellas. Better pay me fo' 'em. If you'll only marry me I'll call it square fo' dem yer boots," said he, as a bright idea struck him.

"Marry you fo' ter pay fo' dem boots? By golly, I'd sooner earn de money straightening niggers' wool, one sprig at a time," said she, indignantly.

"Miss Assafidity, am dat a insinuation dat you would sooner marry a white man dan you would me?"

"Wha' dat got ter do wid it? Go 'bout you own business an' leave me 'lone," she said, turning away.

"By golly, I fea' dat I neber cotech dat gal," he mused, as he went about his work.

Indeed, he wasn't making much progress in that direction, and he sometimes suspected that he had a successful rival somewhere.

Dick Plunket had for sometime been thinking how he could start some fun between Ebenezer and another young buck of the colored persuasion who was coachman for a family living in the next cottage.

This darkey's name was Jeddiah Ham, and so far as personal appearances went he was much the best looking of the two, although they were both about equally stupid in everything.

He had been over to Mrs. Plunket's cottage several times on errands for his mistress, and it was only natural that he should come in contact

with the pretty cook, although in truth she cared no more for him than for Ebenezer.

Dick had noticed his coming and how sweet he had shown himself to be on Miss Brown. But Ebenezer had never observed it, because his head was so thick that you would have to club it with a cart rung in order to make him see a point.

But Dick concluded that he could have a little fun if he could only make him jealous, and so he resolved to set about it without loss of time.

This other darkey, Ham, worked for a family by the name of Rose, and Billy Rose, the son, about Dick's own age, was nearly as full of mischief as he was himself; and so of course it did not take long for them to get acquainted and to come to a pleasant understanding on things in general.

Dick told him of all the fun he had had at various times with Ebenezer, and he soon learned that Billy had enjoyed nearly as much with Jed. So they talked matters over and concluded to get the two darkeys into each other's wool, if possible.

"Say, Sneezer, I don't call you much of a man," said Dick, soon afterwards.

"Who dat; wha' dat you say?" asked Ebenezer, in surprise.

"I don't call you much of a man."

"How dat?"

"You arn't game."

"Bout what, Dicky?"

"About the cook."

"I—I don't comestand yer, chile."

"Why, I thought you loved her?"

"Dat am a fac', Dicky, why?"

"Well, and you let another fellow come right in and get her away from you."

"What dat? Who dat?" he asked, quickly.

"Why, Jed Ham."

"Go 'way, chile, squit you foolin'."

"All right."

"What 'bout dat galoot?"

"Galoot! I think he's smarter than you are."

"Bout what?"

"Why, with the girls; our cook, especially."

"Go 'way, dar, chile, what you gibin' me?"

"Something straight. Why, he's over here nearly every day making love to her."

"Am dat so?" he asked, looking serious.

"Of course it is, and you never tumble."

"I bust his jaw fo' him if he come foolin' round heah," said he, shaking his clenched fist.

"Don't be too sure of that."

"I broke him all ter pieces. I go ober dar now an' double him all up."

"Don't try it on too suddenly."

"Why not?"

"He's a hard hitter."

"Don't care nuffin' 'bout dat; I can lick two such duffers any time."

"Billy says he is a prize-fighter, and cleaned out four Thompson street roughs the day before the family came down to the Branch."

Ebenezer looked sober.

"I'll shoot him."

"I wouldn't."

"I'll cut him wid a razor."

"Then they'd hang you."

"Don't care nuffin' 'bout dat."

"I don't wonder that you are mad. It is awfully mean."

"I tole you, Dicky, dat I make a black-burying time wid dat nigger."

"But it's all your own fault. If you paid more attention to the girl yourself, he wouldn't have any show. He's got the inside track now, though. Don't you see how smiling she is whenever he comes over here?"

"I broke him all ter pieces."

"And if I am not greatly mistaken, they were both out on the lawn under the arbor last night, making love while you were snoring."

"Don't tell me any mo', Dicky. Dat yer blum-gunshus coon hab got ter draw off, or I cut him all up inter fish bait."

"Blackfish bait, I suppose?" said Dick, laughing.

"I'll anchor him in de bottom ob de riber, an make an eel-pot out ob him."

"Don't do anything rash, Sneezer. Mammy don't want to lose her coachman jst now."

"Don't fool wid me, chile; fo' I's a bad man when I gets my jealousy up."

Dick couldn't help thinking of Othello, and that he was himself playing the part of Iago in real life. But he was enjoying it hugely.

He left him in a towering rage, and made it a point to see the cook shortly afterwards, and to tell her all about it, for the sake of having her co-operation with him in the fun.

Billy Rose was also posted, and he in turn told Jed that Mrs. Plunket's cook was in love with him, and that Ebenezer Crow was mortally jealous of him on account of it.

"Chile, am dat so?" asked Jed, with a grin that reached from the top of his head down to his shirt collar.

"Of course it is. Better look out. He's a bad man, and carries a razor in his boot," said Billy.

"What he want ter blame me fo'? I can't help it if she falls in lub wid me."

"Oh, you wicked man!"

"Dey all do it, Billy."

"Do what?"

"Fall in lub wid me. But it shows dere good taste, at all events."

Jed was an egotistical darkey, and always took it for granted that every colored girl he saw was in love with him right away.

"But you had better look out for Ebenezer. I tell you he's a bad—bad man."

"Lord bress you, chile, I sha'n't bodder my head 'bout it. Got all de gals I want."

"But you haven't got any so good-looking as that one is."

"Nonsense."

"But he will go for you anyway."

"Am dat so?" he asked, in alarm.

"You bet he will."

"By golly."

"Best thing you can do is to go armed."

"No, I keep away from dar altogether."

"What! And let him bluff you out of a gal who is dead gone on you?"

Jed was silent.

"She'll give you the grand laugh."

"But I don't want any fuss wid him."

"And so you will let him bluff you, eh?"

"No, sah, I shall not, I will protect dat gal wid my life, only I don't want no fuss."

"All right. Brace right up to him. Don't let him bluff you. Dick says that all you have to do is to talk right up to him."

"By golly. I do dat."

And this was how Billy was working his part of the racket.

The next day he purposely put up a job to have Jed sent over to Mrs. Plunket's cottage on an errand, and Dick fixed it so that Eben would be on hand to watch him, and also had an understanding with the cook so that she was to act her part all right.

She managed to meet him, and the way she did coquette and make him believe that she was dead in love with him, was quite enough to convince him that it was so, and to drive poor Ebenezer almost wild with jealousy.

Presently he couldn't stand it any longer, and when Jed left the house, he went for him.

"Mr. Ham, you will please hab de kindness ter reduce de extent ob you freshness when you come heah," said he, with great dignity.

"Sah?" replied Jed, entirely cool.

"You freshness am too conspicuous."

"Bout who dat you talk, Mr. Crow?"

"You am too new. Understan' dat?"

"No, sah; I hab always 'sociate wid gemmen, an' I don't 'stand what you allude to."

"You am too fresh 'round Miss Brown. Do you understan' dat?"

"No, sah. But if Miss Brown see fit fo' ter smile on me, I don't know as it hab got anything ter do wid you," said Jed, pompously.

"Better look out, or I show you."

"Am you engage to dat lutly female?"

"Dat am none ob your business."

"I amn't to be bluffed, sah. If Miss Brown say fo' herself dat she prefer your company to mine, dat settles it. But if she encourages me wid her entrancing smiles, I shall not resent it."

"Better look out, I tole yer."

"Can't bluff me, Mr. Crow."

"But I can knock der stuffing out ob yer."

"Not much. I hab chaw up better coons dan you are," said Jed, bracing up, for Miss Brown was standing near enough to hear what was being said, and he was anxious to appear brave in her eyes, although, in fact, he was trembling fearfully.

And so was Ebenezer, while Dick and Billy were taking it all in.

"I kill fourteen men in my life. So yer better look out fo' me; I's bad," said Eben.

"So be I—I kill twenty. Allus kills two eberv year, an' I habn't kill but one so far," replied Jed, resolved to be a few better.

The truth was, that one of them was afraid, and the other dare not.

"You jus' keep away from dat gal, or der will be a family in Long Branch in want ob a black coachman," said Ebenezer.

"Better mind you' eye, Mr. Crow, fo' I amn't a man to be fooled wid."

"All right. I gib yer fair warnin'."

"Dat's all right," replied Jed, walking away.

"Next time I catch you ober heah, I broke yer back. Heah dat?" shouted Eben.

"Wonder what I'll be doin' all dat time?"

"Be yellin' like a stuck pig."

"Bah!"

"Go 'long, yer big nigger."

"Pot call de kittle black. Yah-yah-yah!"

"Come back heah, now, an' I bust yer nose all ter smash."

Ebenezer felt his courage rise just in proportion to the distance that his rival got away.

"Go shoot yourself!"

"Git out, yer big coon!"

"All right fo' you! Dar am gwine fo' ter be trouble atween us, fo' shuah!" yelled Jed.

"Oh, who 'fraid ob you?"

And so they parted.

Eben turned to the cook, who stood there, laughing.

"If you want dat big black cuss, take him, but he mustn't come foolin' round heah," said he.

"What's de matter with you?"

"Dat's all right."

"Am you de boss 'round heah?"

"Neber you mind. He better look out fo' me, dat's all," said he, with a big swagger.

"Now, de bes' thing fo' you ter do, Mr. Crow, am ter simmer down. You am too previous."

"Don't you call me no such names as dat."

"Guess I'll have who I like come ter see me."

"Dat am all right, Miss Brown, but dat nigger mustn't get too cluster me or I make a funeral ob him."

"You make a funeral! You wouldn't hurt a cat. All you can do is ter catch big fish," said she, laughing.

"An' all you can do is ter wear big boots."

Mrs. Plunket came along just then and put an end to the chin music.

But Ebenezer had his "ebenezer" up bad, and was almost ready to fight. In fact, if he could have found a little fellow he probably would have sailed into him heavy.

Dick and Billy in the meantime were working things so as to continue the fun, and finally they arranged to have a boat race between the rivals, the winner to have peaceable possession of the good-looking cook, and no questions asked.

And this was pleasing to them both, for they were both afraid of each other, and any way out of their dilemma short of fighting was just what they both wanted.

Miss Brown agreed to it after Dick explained to her how they intended to work it.

"Now, Sneezer, you want to put in all of your spare time at practicing," said Dick, after things were all arranged.

"How dat?"

"How is it? You don't want to get beaten, do you?"

"Guess not."

"Then you have got to brace up, for Jed is hefty on the oar. Why, he's out rowing every day, and working like a beaver."

"Am dat so?"

"Of course it is."

"What do Miss Assafidity say?"

"Oh, she says she'll brace up to the fellow that wins the race," said Dick.

"Dat am all right, Dicky; I am g'wine fo' ter win dat race, an' don't you fo'get it. Whar am de boats?"

"Down by the river where we went fishing. They are to be flat-bottomed boats. Billy is to be coxswain for Jed, and I am to do the same for you. But you must practice or he will beat you as sure as guns."

"All right. Don't you whistle dat I won't win."

Following this advice, Ebenezer went down to the river, and worked like a beaver for about a week, while Jed did the same. But neither of them spoke. They recognized the fact that they were rivals, and that muscle was to decide which of them was to have the handsome yellow girl.

Dick and Billy in the meantime were doing all they could to perfect the business, and in order to make the affair more exciting, they sent out invitations to a large number of persons so as to have an appreciative crowd around when the race came off.

At length the day assigned for the contest arrived, and the two rogues stated the terms and conditions of the race.

They were to row a straight away race of two miles in flat-bottomed boats, each with a coxswain, and the winner was to be rewarded with the hand and favor of Mrs. Plunket's cook.

And by the time the race was to come off, all the servants and young folks at Long Branch had heard of it, and were on hand to see the result of the novel contest, and besides these, there were a large number of the better class who anticipated some fun, and so gathered around to witness it.

"How do you feel, Eben?" asked Dick, on the morning of the race day.

"Feel! Why, chile, I feels like silk," said he. "Think you will win?"

"Think! Why, honey, I's dead shure ob it." "That's all right; but remember Jed's no slouch, and you have got to work like the mischief to beat him. The betting is all in his favor."

"Dicky, I's gwine fo' ter beat dat galloot so bad dat he will fink dat he was born beat."

"All right, but you have got to work for it. I think myself, from seeing you both row, that you are pretty evenly matched; and so it gets right down to a question of endurance. You want to jump right in on about forty strokes a minute and keep it up to the end of the race. Do you think you can do it?"

"Why, chile; I can slide in on fifty a minute."

"All right; the cook is going to be there, for she is greatly interested, of course, and her presence will make Jed do his yellow best."

"Don't you fret 'bout me, honey. Yer jus' steer de boat all right an' I do de rowin'."

"Very well; Billy and I will go ahead and have the boats all ready, and you be there by three o'clock. Don't wear anything but your pants and undershirt to row in, remember."

"All right, Dicky."

"I have got all my money bet on you, so just bear that in mind."

"Dicky, I'll make a rich boy ob yer."

"I hope so. I'm off now; brace up."

"Oh, chile, yer orter feel my muscle."

Dick and Billy were at the appointed place fully an hour ahead of time, and busied themselves with the boats, while the crowd to see the sport gradually increased until there were at least a thousand people scattered along the shore.

Both Dick and Billy had obtained a four-pronged anchor which they secured to the stern of their respective boats in such a manner as not to attract attention, and to each of these anchors there was attached about fifty feet of rope.

Well, at the appointed hour the rival darkeys put in an appearance. Each of them stripped for the contest, and then stepped into the boats.

The crowd gathered around and speculated upon the result, some betting upon one and some upon the other. Miss Assafidity Brown was also there, and with her smiling face she looked brighter and more winsome than ever.

This was enough to fire them both, and kissing their hands to her, they rowed slowly out to the starting point, guided by the two mischievous boys, who were looking as sober as sheep.

At length the station was reached, and expectation was on tip toe, the shores were lined, and two bigger feeling darkeys than Ebenezer Crow and Jeddiah Ham were it would be impossible to find anywhere.

"I bet you fifty dollars dat I beat you," said Eben, after all was arranged.

"I see that fifty an' go you fifty better," said Jed.

"Dat settles it."

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked Dick.

"All readr."

"One—two—three—go!" he said.

Both men jumped to their oars like toughs, and the way they did work was a caution.

But both Dick and Billy had quietly dropped their anchors, and they had taken a first-class hold on the muddy bottom, keeping the boats almost exactly opposite and stationary.

The crowd on shore did not notice this racket, and they began to cheer when the stalwart darkeys began to get down to business.

"Go it, sneezer!" cried Dick.

"Go it, Jed!" yelled Billy.

"Get right down to it!"

"Give it to 'em!"

"Quicker! Now then. Go it!"

"Don't you let him beat you!"

"My money's on Ebenezer. Sail in!"

The boys yelled, as did the crowd on shore, and those two darkeys were working like black devils, while the two boats remained perfectly stationary. But the idea was with the rivals that one was just as good as the other, and both put in their biggest.

Finally, those on shore saw the joke, and set up such a yell as was never heard before.

Eben and Jed thought it was the cheering of their friends, and worked away until both were winded.

"Go in, Sneezer!" yelled Dick.

"Do your best, Jed. Faster!"

"Faster!"

"A-a-amn't we almos' dar?" asked Eben.

"No; only half way yet."

Cheer after cheer came from the crowd, and the farce was kept up for fifteen minutes. Finally, Dick called out:

"Hold on! A tie!"

"Yes, a tie!" replied Billy.

The two rivals were glad enough to stop and get their wind, during which time the young rogues pulled up the anchors and secured them to the sterns, after which the boats were slowly rowed ashore.

The derisive laugh which greeted them after they stepped out was the first thing that awakened them to the fact of the sell that had been practiced upon them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two sicker-looking darkeys than Ebenezer Crow and Jeddiah Ham were when they found out that the two boys, Dick Plunket and Billy Rose, had played such a joke on them, would have been hard to find anywhere.

They received the grand laugh everywhere, and no one enjoyed it more than Miss Assafidity Brown, the cream-colored wench on whose account the rowing match had taken place.

They soon saw how it was, and sneaked away home by the shortest route, neither one of them caring to look at the other or at the cause of all their trouble.

But each of them vowed to murder the young rascals who had put up the job and brought them into such ridicule.

The crowd slowly retired, laughing over the affair, and a large number gathered around Dick and Billy to praise and thank them for the amusement they had afforded them. In fact, it soon became the talk and laugh of the town. The local papers took it up and made as much more out of it as they possibly could, until it seemed as though everybody in town was laughing over it.

Ebenezer kept out of sight until it was time to wait on the dinner table that evening, but in the meantime he had thought of an excuse that he imagined would let up on him a little.

There were several guests at dinner, and they were all on the grin when they entered the dining-room, for not only had they been to witness the grotesque rowing match, but they had heard of all sorts of other jokes which Dick had played upon the oleaginous darkey at different times; for in spite of Mrs. Plunket's lectures to Dick, regarding his mischievous pranks, she was secretly pleased and did not hesitate to tell of them to others. But he kept out of sight now.

The cook, however, was the first to meet and tackle him about the sell, and she laughed so loudly that they heard her all over the house.

"Eben, dat war de wus sell dat I eber hearn tell ob," said she.

"So it war, by golly, Miss Brown, so it war. Guess dat black galloot won't come foolin' 'roun' heah any mo'," replied Eben, laughing, but not heartily.

"Black galloot! Who dat?"

"Why, dat Ham. Who you 'spect?"

"Why, you war in fo' it jus' as much as he."

"War I—war I, honey?"

"Ob co'se. What yer givin' me?"

"What! Didn't you know that Dicky and I put up dat job on him?"

"Ob, yah-yah-yah! What a fool nigger."

"Dat's so."

"I know dat's so," she replied, pointing at him.

"Dicky an' I put up dat job on him."

"Go 'way! What you took me fo'? Dick and Billy put it up on bof ob yer, an' I knowed all 'bout it."

"Nonsense, honey, you am mistooked. Ask Dicky 'bout it if yer don't b'leve me."

"I knows all 'bout it, ole man. Dick tole me now he war a gwine fo' ter work it, an' axed me fo' ter go down an' see de fun! Go long!—Oh, dat am de wuss dat eber was in the world," and again she laughed.

"I tole yer dat yer war laborin' under a halluculation."

"What war yer laborin' under? A hot sun, I guess. Which one ob yer win dat race?"

"Honey, I tole yer it war a joke."

"I know dat; a joke on bof ob yer at the same time. Go 'long, dar am Mrs. Plunket's table bell."

Ebenezer started for the dining-room, where the family and guests were already assembled and seated. But that hopeful grin had been banished from his mug, for he knew well enough that the two boys had played it both on him and his rival, although he did not expect that anybody but themselves knew it.

Those seated around the table gave him the laugh as he entered the room, and one of the gentlemen asked him how he felt after the victory.

"Oh, I's all right, sah," said he, forcing a smile, and commencing to serve the soup.

"You had a pretty hard pull, did you not?" asked Mrs. Plunket.

"Dat am so, missus. But de joke war on de odder chap," said he, laughing.

"Indeed; how so?"

"Why, yer see, missus, dat col'd pusson, dat Mr. Ham, he make himself bery obnoxious 'round heah, an' so me an' Dicky put up de joke on him 'bout de rowin' match."

"Oh, that was it, hey?"

"Yes'm."

Those present exchanged laughing glances.

"It was a very good sell," said another of the gents.

"Neber knowed anyfing so good in all my life sah, an' I guess it make him good an' sick."

This went down with the soup. In fact, they swallowed it because they did not know for a certainty that it was not true, although Dick had told Rose, his sister, that he was going to play it on the both of the rival darkeys; and so when Eben went from the room to bring in the next course she told them about it.

But he rejoiced that he had made them believe it, and during the remainder of the meal his fat black face shone with a big grin.

In the meantime Dick was over to the house of his friend, Billy Rose, where they were continuing the racket on Jed, who was as mad as a wet hen over the affair. He even felt it more keenly than Eben did, for it did not occur to him to get out of it as he had attempted to do, and his cry was for vengeance on the two young rascals who had worked the circus.

But Dick was equal to the emergency, and by the time he and Billy reached home they had agreed upon a line of action, which was to assure him that the job was wholly put up on Ebenezer Crow and not meant for him at all.

This modified him somewhat, but in spite of it he felt that he was a laughing-stock, and would continue to be, so long as he remained in town.

"Oh, that's all right, Jed," said Dick; "it was only got up to play it on Eben, and if anybody says anything to you about it, all you have to do is to tell them the whole story."

"But s'pose dey won't hab it?" he asked.

"Refer them to us, that's all you have to do; we'll make you all solid, never fear."

"I don't like it fo' a cent—no, sah," said he shaking his head.

"But Miss Brown understands that was only to fool Eben, and that you so understood it," said Billy.

"Am dat so?" he asked, quickly.

"Of course it is," replied Dick.

"Well, den, all right; but I war 'fraid dat she didn't know it. Oh, what a laugh we will have on dat big black Ebenezer Crow!" and he opened his mouth wide enough to take in a cow's liver.

"You bet we will. That'll make him sick, sure enough; and now all you have to do is to walk right into the affections of Miss Brown."

"But I thought de match war ter decide which one ob us war to hab dat lubly being. How dat?"

"Oh, that's all right; and if he kicks, we'll arrange some other test, so that you will be sure to win."

"All right. Oh, won't dat be a sick nigger?"

"You can safely whistle that he will."

Jed went about his work laughing all over, while Dick and Billy came to an understanding what they would do next; and Dick went home to dinner.

The others had finished before he reached there, and so he had Ebenezer all to himself.

"Oh, what a sick chicken that Jed Ham is!" was his first salutation.

Eben just then was feeling as though he could caress him with a cord-wood club; but this did the business right away.

"Am dat so, Dicky? How?"

"Why, you see, we tole him that you knew all about the put-up job on him, and that the cook also knew about it beforehand."

"By golly! am dat so?"

"Of course."

"Oh, won't he be a sick nigger!"

"You bet he will. You'll have the laugh on him after this good enough."

"Oh, by golly! Do you know, Dicky," he said, lowering his voice, "dat I tole de folks dat you an' I put up de whole job on him?"

"That's all right. But we haven't got through with him yet."

"Am dat so?"

"No. He says the rowing match didn't decide anything, and that he demands satisfaction."

"How dat?"

"Well, I don't know yet. But Billy and I will arrange something before long that will fix him, and give him all the satisfaction he wants," said Dick.

"Go fo' him, Dicky!"

"Of course. But if he demands satisfaction, you must brace up to him like a little man."

"Don't you stutter dat I won't, chile."

"All right," and so the match dropped for the time.

The next morning Dick had a talk with the cook, and engaged her still further to help along the racket, which she readily agreed to do, for she loved fun as well as any of them.

Dick's mother attempted to scold him for the trick, but she broke down in spite of herself, and was obliged to laugh and turn away.

"Did you see the race, mammy?" he asked, laughing.

"Richard, you are a very bad boy, and if you don't do better I shall be obliged to send you home to New York. By-and-by you will get Ebenezer mad, and I shall lose him; and only think what a good servant he is, and how he once belonged to Jefferson Davis."

"Oh, he likes the fun."

"But I don't."

"That's because you are not Ebenezer Crow. Besides, he thinks the job was put up on the other fellow, and is laughing loudly over it."

"But you must be careful," said she, turning away.

"Yes, I'll be careful," replied Dick, laughing.

It was not long before he and Billy got their heads together and concocted another circus for the benefit of the two dusky rivals, who, in the meantime, were both feeling first-rate over the affair as they understood it.

Out on the lawn there stood a flag-pole about fifty feet high, and towards this they turned their attention.

It was a smooth, straight pole about six inches in diameter at the bottom, and they finally concluded to grease it nicely, place something on top, and then get the darkeys to climb it—each taking turns of two minutes—the prize to the successful one to be the hand of the pretty colored cook.

Billy Rose was a great hand to climb trees, when in the country, and seeing how easily the men employed to keep the telegraph wires in repair managed to climb the poles by the aid of spurs or creepers, which they fasten to the inside of their boot insteps, he bought a pair, with which he had enjoyed a deal of fun.

He had them now, and with their assistance he climbed to the top of the flag-pole with the greatest ease, and fastened a large orange to the truck through which the flag-cord or halliards ran.

This accomplished, he took a ham rind and greased the pole all the way down, so nicely that it would not show, but of course making it as slippery as an icicle the entire length.

Then they informed the rivals separately that each demanded satisfaction, and that as Miss Brown wished the matter settled one way or the other, it had been arranged that the one who succeeded in reaching and bringing down the orange from the top of the flag-staff should ever after enjoy her smiles to the exclusion of any other man in the world.

"By golly, I gib him all de sausagefraction he want right away," said Eben, "an' if he come foolin' around heah after dat, I broke he jaw all ter smash."

"That's all right," said Dick. "It is understood that this settles it, so do your best, if you care to win."

"Don't get de plapertation ob de heart on my 'count, honey. I can climb like a grasshopper an' shin like a coon."

"I am glad of it, Sneezer, for I have got ten dollars bet on you and Billy has got ten on Jed."

"Dat am all right. Do Miss Brown understand de terms ob de ramification?"

"Oh, yes; she and the rest of the folks will witness the whole affair."

"Good 'nough."

Billy in the meantime was giving it to Jed in about the same way, but assuring him that he had a sure thing of it on account of being so much lighter and more lithe than his opponent.

The next afternoon at three o'clock was appointed for the trial, and the boys had meanwhile told several of their friends to be present to see the sport; and so by the time appointed there were at least fifty of them there.

Both Ebenezer and Jed appeared dressed with only shirts and pantaloons, each bent on victory. It was the first time they had met since the rowing match, and each expected the other to receive the grand laugh on making his appearance; but it happened that each came in for about an equal share.

Miss Assafidity Brown was present among the front row of spectators, dressed in light, showy

colors, and looking lovely enough to capture any darkey in the land.

Mr. Ham approached her with the flourish of a masher, and raised her hand to his lips.

"Miss Brown, I's delighted ter be once mo' in de sunshine ob your lubliness," said he.

"Wonder what dat black galoot am tryin' ter squeeze out ob himself now?" muttered Ebenezer, looking angrily at his rival.

Miss Brown laughed, and seemed pleased.

"An' so Mr. Crow deman's satisfaction, do he?"

"Well, yes, an' I wants de affair condensated somehow right away. I hates dis yer procrastination."

"All right, Miss Brown, I'll soon show him dat he hab nuffin ter do wid you."

"Very well, Mr. Ham. May de best man win," and she looked at him as much as to say that he was the best man by all odds.

"Thank you," and he walked away with more airs than a painted wheelbarrow.

Ebenezer Crow quickly took his place, while the members of Mrs. Plunket's family came out upon the lawn to see the contest.

"What am de matter wid dat yer black galoot?"

"Oh, nothing! only he say he am shuah ter win, an' wants ter know if we shall get married right away," replied the mischievous cook.

"I broke his jaw if he don't took a reef in his freshness. How he know dat he win? Now I's jus' gwine fo' ter bring down dat yer orange fo' yer, an' jus' yer watch me, sweetness."

"All right, I'll watch you."

"Remember, dis yer settles it."

"Ob course."

"An' don't yer get absent-minded 'bout it."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Time!" shouted Dick, and both of the men approached to the pole where he stood, and at the same time a cheer arose which each one claimed for himself.

"Tommy Birch, will you act as time-keeper?" asked Dick, addressing one of his friends.

"Certainly," he replied, stepping into the ring.

"Gentlemen, the terms of this contest are as follows: Each of the contestants is to have two minutes in which to reach the orange at the top of the pole, and the one reaching and bringing it down is to receive the hand and heart of this young lady," said he, pointing to Miss Brown, who tried to blush.

The company cheered, and both Ebenezer and Jed bowed, each believing himself to be the one the cheering was for.

"Billy, you and I will toss for first choice."

"All right," and Dick produced a penny.

"Up she goes!"

"Right. Name it!" he called, while the coin was whirling above their heads.

"Tail!"

"Tail it is. Mr. Ham has the first trial."

Another cheer greeted the announcement.

Jed bowed, and Eben looked ugly.

"Sweetness, I soar aloft fo' dat fruit," said Jed, kissing his hand to the cook.

"Get a sore head if yer don't look out," growled Ebenezer; "jus' watch dat fool nigger!"

"Time!"

"Oh, I guess not!" exclaimed Jed, rushing for the flag-staff.

"I guess not, too," said Eben.

He didn't know it, but he guessed right that time.

Jed clasped the pole in his arms, and began to work his way up, but he came down as fast as he went up, and the crowd yelled like coyotes, and Ebenezer's voice was heard loud above them all.

"Time!" shouted the keeper, and poor Jed, all perspiration and perplexity, retired from the pole amid another wild burst of applause, at which he did not bow.

"Ebenezer Crow!"

"Heah!" replied the grinning, swaggering darkey. "If I couldn't climb better'n dat, I'd go make an eel-pot ob myself. You can't climb so well as you can row," he added, laughing loudly.

"Time!"

With a wild whoop for himself, and a cheer from the company, Ebenezer went for that greased pole, and when he hugged it they fairly howled with delight.

And wasn't he a comical sight, the big fat lubber, struggling, kicking, clawing, shinning and trying to get up that pole, but never getting more than one foot at a time off the ground.

He stopped, spat on his hands, and again went for that prize. The pole was only about fifty feet high, and he got within forty-nine feet of the orange on top of it.

"Oh, what a climber you be! Look at him! Look at de big rower; look at him! Now, den!"

yelled Jed, dancing around the struggling darkey.

Eben's eyes stuck out far enough to hang your hat on, and he was working like a squirrel in a turning cage.

Time was shouted, and he withdrew, puffing and blowing like a whale.

"Mr. Ham."

"Heah I is."

"Time!"

"Oh, I'll fetch it dis time!" said he. "Miss Brown, I produce you dat orange," and he went for it.

Ebenezer tried to say something sarcastic, but he hadn't the wind to do it, and so satisfied his spite by making up faces at his rival.

Jed tried as before, but, as before, he could not get more than a few feet up the pole, although the crowd cheered and encouraged him with clapping of hands, and all sorts of cries.

"There he goes!" shouted one.

"Now, then!" put in another.

"Scramble up, old man!"

"Go it, Jed!"

"Only forty feet more!"

"Go fo' dat orange!"

"Go fo' dat yaller gal!"

"Take a twist with your north leg!"

"Crimp in your left!"

"Strike in with your toe-nails!"

"Grab it with your teeth!"

"Whoop her up!"

"Spit on your hands!"

"Time!" shouted the keeper; and poor Jed slid down ker-chunk upon the ground.

A loud laugh and derisive cheer greeted him.

"Oh, what a climber you be!" said Ebenezer.

"I got higher den you did," replied Jed.

"Get out! You can't climb ober a dunghill."

"Den I can't climb ober you."

"Time!"

"Now I fotch him!" said Eben, spitting on his hands, and going again for the greased pole.

Another loud, laughing cheer greeted him, and the crowd gathered closer around the pole.

It was do or die with him this time, and, summoning all the strength he had, he grasped the pole, and began to shin up.

He meant business now, if there was any such thing, and he actually worked himself up six or eight feet on the pole, while the crowd cheered lustily.

Miss Brown approached nearer, and applauded him with voice and hands.

"Go it, Ebenezer! Go it if you love me! Once mo', ole man—once mo'!" she cried.

But it was no use. Eben had already done his best, and when "time" was called, he was out of both breath and confidence, and slid heavily to the ground like a bag of beans.

"Dat pole am greased!" said he, breathless.

A loud cheer greeted this, for everybody in the crowd knew that it was greased, and the fact of his only tumbling to it at this late hour of course pleased them.

Jed also tumbled.

"Time!" was again shouted.

"Not much. Dis yer am anodder ob dem smart-aleck tricks, an' yer don't cotch me makin' a fool ob myself any mo'," said he, indignantly.

A shout of derision greeted this.

"Do you weaken?" asked Dick.

"Dat am a greased pole."

"Get out! You weaken."

"I claim de stakes," said Ebenezer.

"No you won't. It amn't squar," said Jed.

"No, it am round," suggested Miss Brown.

"An' awful slippery."

"You can't clime fo' sour apples," sneered Eben.

"Dar am a job on us, Mr. Crow."

"An' you hab a job ter beat me."

"I can beat you at anything!" he retorted.

"Scrap it out!" shouted somebody.

"Rough and tumble!" suggested another.

"Prize ring!"

"Set 'em up!"

"Have it out!"

Both men were so wild by this time that it only required some one to push them together, and at it they went like two black dogs, while some of the crowd shouted and others assisted Dick and Billy to bring out the garden hose and force pump.

A stream of water was thrown upon them as they were rolling over and over upon the grass, and this quickly brought them to their senses, and each released his grasp.

"Look out for his razor!" shouted Dick.

This was a finisher, for although neither of them had a razor, neither knew but the other had, and both being cowardly, they broke and ran in different directions, cheered by the yelling

crowd, who had laughed themselves sore over their various antics.

CHAPTER XV.

THE "circus" of attempting to climb the greased pole by Ebenezer Crow and his rival, Jed Ham, was one of the wildest into which Dick Plunket had ever led his victim yet.

The cry of "razor!" when they were on the grass in a "rough and tumble" after being wet down by the garden hose, was all that was required to part them, and they never made quicker time in their lives than they each made in getting out of each others' reach.

"Look out for him!" shouted Dick.

"Look out for Eben; he's after you with a razor!" yelled Billy, and then a shout went up that was heard a mile away.

But when the two frightened darkeys looked around and saw that, instead of any danger, they were running away from each other, they stopped and tried to find out what the matter was with them.

"Big overgrown nigger. Better not come foolin' round me!" muttered Jed.

"Lucky fo' you dat you run away or I smash yer all ter smashes!" roared Ebenezer, shaking his fist at his late antagonist, and bracing up bravely.

Then the crowd yelled again, and some of the little fellows stood on their heads in the ecstasy of delight.

"Big fool nigger! Catch yer 'round heah any mo' I bust yer crust!" said Ebenezer, turning to go into the cottage.

"Look out for him!" yelled several, and under the impression that some new danger was after them, they both dodged out of sight.

Well, it was the funniest racket ever known, and everybody, even Mrs. Plunket, enjoyed it first-rate.

It was as good as a circus to all hands, and especially did the cause of all the trouble between the rival darkeys, Miss Assafidity Brown, enjoy it until she could scarcely breathe, so heartily did she laugh.

By the time the folks returned to the cottage Eben had resumed a more presentable dress, but he was so mad that he kicked himself all around the place.

"By golly, dat settles it. Dat Dicky hab got fo' ter leab dis yer family or I do. I won't stan' any mo' ob his nonsense. I go right now an' see his mudder 'bout it."

And so he did, but he only got laughed at for his pains, and told to have nothing to do with Dick if he didn't want pranks played on him.

This was rather poor satisfaction, but it was all he could get, and just as he was leaving her presence, he came upon the laughing cook, Miss Brown.

She attempted to speak to him, but she couldn't for laughing.

"Mighty tickled 'bout somefin', arn't you?" he sneered, as she continued her laugh.

"Oh, dat am de wuss dat eber was. Eben, you am de biggest fool nigger in de world, only 'ceptin' dat Jed Ham," said she.

"Didn't I beat him climbin'?"

"No, you didn't beat him at nuffin'."

"But de pole war greased."

"Ob co'se it war, an' you didn't know it."

"How I know 'bout it?"

"Oh, you wouldn't tumble if a house fell on yer. An' den, by golly, what a fight."

"I don't care, I licked him if he did hab a razor," replied Ebenezer.

"Razor!" she exclaimed, laughing again and throwing her arms above her head.

"Ob co'se; didn't you see it?"

"What foolishness; nobody had a razor."

"I tole yer dat he hab a razor 'bout a foot long. Seen it wid my own eyes; guess I know."

"What a fool! You were both frightened at each other, an' run like blazes."

"Me frightened. Me frightened ob dat coon! Guess not, honey."

"What you run so fo'?"

"Why, yer don't 'spose dat I want ter stay dar an' get cut wid dat razor, do yer? But I bet he won't come foolin' 'round heah any mo'; I bet he's all broke up."

"Bahl you didn't hurt him."

"Didn't. Didn't you see me hab my thumb in his mouf, tryin' ter pull out his tongue?"

"Pshaw! let's see your thumb."

Eben held it up, and sure enough, it looked as though it had been in somebody's mouth and been rather badly bitten; but whether he thrust it into Jed's mouth, as he claimed to have done, or whether Jed seized it while the fight was going on was not known.

"Didn't I tole yer?" he asked, triumphantly.

"Guess dat war like de man dat run his head ag'in de odder man's fist so dat he shouldn't strike out. But it war de wuss ole circus dat eber war."

"An' I jus' gwine fo' ter kill dat Dicky fer pay fo' greasin' dat pole, shuah."

"You better let dat boy 'lone or he make you sick some mo'."

"I'se sick now ob his debiltrums."

"Well, you is such a big fool dat anybody can play jokes on you. Go 'way."

"Don't play no big boots on me, though," said Eben, referring to the snap which she once got into.

"But dey play eberyting else on yer. Go 'long!" and she gave him a push and went to the kitchen.

"But I win dat bet, honey," said he, grinning, and following her up.

"Not much. You win nuffin. I wouldn't hab such a big fool as you be, anyway. Go climb anoder greased pole. Yah-yah-yah!"

Eben went out to the stable, feeling even worse than before he met her. There he encountered Dick, the roguish young rascal who had just put up the job.

He was still laughing over it, and as for Billy Rose, his assistant, he had gone home to console Jed, and make him believe that it was Ebenezer who had put up the whole job, and that he had got the worst of it all around.

But Jed was really sick, and, understanding the joke that had been played on him, making him for the second time a guy and laughing stock, he took a grand tumble, and resolved to keep entirely away from both Ebenezer Crow and the pretty colored cook who had caused all the trouble. In fact, to shake the whole lot of them, leaving Ebenezer to claim everything, if he wanted to.

"Dick, I's made up my mind fo' ter kill yer," said Eben, when they met.

"Kill me! What for?" asked the lad, all at once becoming as sober as an owl.

"Fo' dat scaley joke dat you play on me."

"Nonsense! I played no joke on you."

"How 'bout dat greased pole?"

"Why, you greased it yourself."

"How dat?"

"Why, you are so fat, and you hugged the pole so hard that you squeezed the grease right out of your body; that's how the pole got greased."

"Dicky, de debil am in you big 's a woodchuck."

"Why, I'm your best friend."

"How dat?"

"Didn't I turn the garden hose on Jed when I saw he was about to cut you with a razor?"

"Did he hab a razor?"

"Did he! What made you run?"

"Well, I funk so, but I warn't certain."

"Of course; and if I hadn't turned the water on him he would have cut you."

"Am dat so?"

"Ask anybody."

"My golly!" he mused.

"You see he was awfully mad because you beat him climbin'."

"Am dat so? Did I beat him bad?"

"Of course you did."

"An' am de prize mine?"

"Certainly."

"But she say no."

"Oh, I'll have a talk with her and fix it; of course you beat him."

"Dicky, I just rub dat nigger all ober wid a big nutmeg grater if he come 'round heah any mo', see 'f I don't."

"Oh, he won't bother you any more, you bet."

"I—I hab him 'rested for tryin' to shoot me wid dat razor!"

"Of course."

"I make him so sick dat he send fo' de undertaker. But don't play no mo' jokes on me, Dicky, will yer?"

"That's all right, Sneezzer;" and so the matter rested for the time being.

Dick had a talk with the cook, and they had an understanding so that Ebenezer was to be regarded as the winner of the prize, although she would not give up her privilege of coquetting with and tantalizing him to her heart's content.

Thus matters stood for several days, during which time Ebenezer was chinned out of his madness toward Dick, and was once more himself again.

Jed, however, kept out of sight, and nothing could induce him to visit Mrs. Plunket's cottage again; he had a belly full, while Ebenezer was just as big a sucker as ever. In fact, nothing could make him tumble.

It was now getting late in the season, and preparations were being made to return to New York. The hotels at Long Branch were nearly empty, and several of the cottages had been vacated, and the "season" was over.

Mrs. Plunket resolved on getting back to her city home, and Ebenezer was set about getting things in readiness for removal.

Getting into a suit of old clothes, he was employed about the garden and stable all one day, while Dick, who had given him a rest for a week or so, was out fishing or gathering chestnuts with his chum, and Ebenezer had things all his own way.

Dick returned in the afternoon, however, and found him fast asleep in the stable, and a more comical-looking coon than he was would not have been easy to find.

The young mischief looked at him for a moment, and tried to think what he could do to have some fun with him.

Finally he remembered a pot of white paint that stood on a shelf in the carriage room, and he at once resolved to make a zebra or an Indian out of him, and started at once to get it.

Taking a small brush, he proceeded to stripe his face in all sorts of ways, painting a white ring around both his eyes, and, in fact, he made one of the most curious-looking objects of him that was ever seen in the world.

After finishing the job, he returned the paint, and allowed him to sleep until the stripes were well dried, intending to awaken him afterwards.

But Eben awoke himself in about an hour after being painted, and, feeling hungry, he started for the cottage, for the purpose of seeing the cook, and having his bread basket replenished.

Now it must be borne in mind that none of them had seen him in his old clothes, which, taken with his striped face, made him look as much like the devil as it was possible for any human being to look under any circumstances.

Going up the back stoop, he went directly into the kitchen, where Miss Brown was at work, with her back to the door at which he entered.

"Honey, am der any ob dat col' ham left?" he asked of her.

She turned to look at him, and the next instant she let out a yell that startled everybody within a mile.

From his dress she took him for a tramp; from his striped face she believed him to be at least one of the devil's imps.

"What am de matter, honey?" he asked, in amazement.

But this only made her yell the louder, if possible, and brought everybody in the house upon the scene. The women yelled, and Dick's black and tan went for his shins, evidently resolved on trying a new sample of meat.

Eben was completely dumfounded, and tried to find out what the row was all about; but before he could do so the two Irish servant girls caught up brooms and went for him, while the cook seized a rolling pin and joined in the onslaught, driving him from the cottage, when Dick put in his oar by firing three or four shots from his revolver, without, however, attempting to hit him.

Mrs. Plunket called for somebody to go for a policeman, while the others were giving it to him the worst way, and he was yelling for dear life and trying to find out what it meant.

"Down wid the dirty bastel!" shouted one of the girls, banging him on the nose with her broom.

"Kill him, for he's the devil, I'm sure," said the other, giving him a terrible whack just below his vest line, while the cook gave him the rolling-pin on the back of his head, knocking him down so that the dog could get a better chance at him.

Eben bellowed like a big bull calf.

"Hole on dar!" he cried.

"Gib it to him!" shouted the cook, giving him another thump, while one of the girls caught up a pail of slops and emptied it over him.

"Stop it!" he yelled, half choked to death.

"Go for him!" cried Dick, sicing on the dog.

"Run for an officer, Richard," said his mother.

"Don't you dare to do it," cried his sister. "Don't think of leaving us alone with that awful creature."

"All right, then, come and help kill him," said Dick. "Bring down that big revolver. That'll fix him if he isn't boiler plated."

"Mercy—mercy!" yelled Ebenezer. "Don't yer know me? What am de matter?"

"Give it ter the bloody-ould zebra," said the chambermaid, banging him again.

"Faix, he's an Injun; kill him," said the other.

"Do go away, Mr. Indian!" said Rose, tearfully.

"What am de matter wid yer. Don't yer know me? Don't yer know Ebenezer Crow?"

"Of course we do," replied Dick, "and I only wish he was here."

"Ebenezer!" shouted Mrs. Plunket.

"Ebenezer Crow!" called Rose.

"Eben, you big lazy crow, whar am yer?" asked the cook, looking towards the stable.

"Don't yer see me? What am der matter?" he called, piteously, and by this time he was a pitiable-looking sight.

"Where is Ebenezer?" asked Mrs. Plunket, looking anxiously around. "Come and help drive this horrible creature away."

"Bring me that revolver, Rose, I'll fix him."

"Fo' de Lor', I funks dat you hab all run mad. Don't yer see me?"

"See who?" asked the cook, seemingly recognizing his voice.

"Why, me—Ebenezer Crow. What's de matter wid yer?"

"Go for the bloody bastel!" yelled the chambermaid, slamming him again with her broom.

"Stop it, I tole yer!"

"Hold on! wait a moment!" cried Mrs. Plunket. "Who and what are you, miserable man?"

"Don't yer know who I am, Mrs. Plunket? Jes' 'cause I got on some old clogs, don't yer know me?"

"Is that you, Ebenezer?"

"Ob course it am me. 'Pears like yer all gwyne crazy 'bout somefin'."

"In Heaven's name, how came you looking like such a fright?" she asked.

"Why, I's been packin' up things, an' put on dese yer ole clogs."

"But your face?"

They all began to gather around him now, greatly interested, of course. Dick called off his dog, that had been chewing on various portions of the unfortunate darkey's body, wherever he could get the best hold.

"What 'bout my face?" he asked, getting upon his feet again.

"What is on it?"

"Nuffin' but sorrow, I 'spect."

"By golly, it really am dat fool nigger," said the cook.

"What's the matter with your head-piece, Sneezzer?" asked Dick, laughing.

"What am de matter wid all yer head-pieces, mo' like."

"Go look in the mirror."

"I don't understan' you, noways."

"Neither do we understand you. Is this some more of your masquerading?" asked Mrs. Plunket, severely.

"Missus Plunket, I am n't 'radin', nahow."

"Den you am a natural born fool," said the cook.

"You better squit yer foolin'."

"Go and look in the glass," said Dick.

Ebenezer went into the kitchen, and took a look at himself in the glass.

Then he started back, and tried to run away from himself. In fact, he did rush out of doors in a jam, while the others laughed.

"Wha—wha—what am it?" he asked, finally.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Tell me, and I'll give it to you," said Dick.
 "Who—who?"
 "You've got the zebra fever, I guess."
 "Zebra? Am it bad?" he asked, in alarm.
 "Sure death."
 "Oh, Lord!"
 "Richard, stop your nonsense. I suspect you had something to do with it," said Mrs. Plunket, at which they all laughed but Eben.

"Me? I haven't seen him before to-day, and if I had, wouldn't he know it?"

"Where have you been, Ebenezer?"
 "Waal, I got tired an' took a little nap out in de stables; dat's all," said he, looking foolish.
 "I guess that accounts for it. Go and wash your face at once."

He went to the kitchen to do so, and Dick slid out and went over to see Billy Rose, whose folks were also going to move into town the next day.

Of course he told him all about his last racket, and they had a good laugh over it.

Meanwhile some soap and water had restored Ebenezer Crow to his former looks, although it took a week or two for him to recover from the pounding which he got at the hands of his fellow servants.

It was only natural that they should all suspect Dick Plunket of the mischief, but as there was no way of proving it, the whole thing ended in a laugh as usual, although Ebenezer was not able to pucker his mouth to take part in it.

"I tole yer, Ebenezer, dat you am mo' den ten parts fool," said Miss Brown, that evening, while the servants were alone in the kitchen.

"Fool! How I know 'bout dat zebra business? Weren't I sleep?" he asked, indignantly.

"You am allus 'sleep, I guess."

"Dick put dat on me I bet."

"That Dick will be the death ob you yet if you don't keep you eye open mo'," said she, and while they were speaking he came in.

"Halloo, Sneezer, got over your zebra fever yet?" he asked, briskly.

"Dicky, did you fix me dat way?" he asked, in a hurt tone of voice.

"Fix you how? Fix nothing. What are you giving me?"

"What war de matter wid me?"

"Well, I thought you had several things pretty bad when the girls all got at you," said he, laughing.

"But what the matter wid my face?"

"Why, you had the zebra fever."

"What dat, chile?"

"Comes from drinking gin."

"Am dat so?"

"Do you drink gin, Eben?" asked the cook.

"Neber take a snootful in my life."

"What! How about that black bottle out there in the stable? Don't deny it."

Eben tried hard to blush, but it was a failure.

"That settles it," said the cook.

"What dat?"

"I shall never marry a man who drinks."

"And only think how much he must drink to have the zebra fever. Don't ever marry him unless he swears off good and strong," said Dick.

"You bet I won't."

"Dicky, you go back on me!" said he, reproachfully.

"Of course; you don't expect that I want a man in our family who is liable to get striped, do you?"

"Dicky, dat all wash off, an' I guess you do it."

"All right," and he started to leave the room.

But while he had been talking he managed to pin Ebenezer and Miss Brown together with a "safety pin," fastening the tail of his coat to the skirt of her dress, so that when they shortly afterwards attempted to get up before retiring to their chambers, there was a rip that took about one half of that yellow girl's clothing off in a twinkling.

Thinking that it was a trick of his own to get even with her, she went for him "hammer and tongs," and nearly pulled the wool all out of his head, causing him to bellow like a calf.

"If you fool 'round me any mo' like dat, Ebenezer Crow, I make you sick 'nough fo' a funeral," said she.

"I didn't do it, honey," said he, meekly.

"Don't tell me dat, you big gin-pig."

"Honey, it was dat Dicky, fo' shuah."

"Clar out ter bed, an' if yer speaks ter me again, I bust yer black crust. You heah?"

"Oh, honey, you is so mistaken."

"Clar out, I tole yer!"

Eben saw the fire in her eye and lit out.

Well, in a day or two the whole family took up their summer traps and started for New York, Ebenezer remaining until the last and taking up the horses and carriages by steamer.

The two Irish servant girls were discharged until the next year, and once more the whole family was back again in their beautiful city home.

But there was one member of that family who wasn't a bit glad to see Dick and Ebenezer return again, and that was Professor Dinglebus, whom the reader will doubtless remember.

During the absence of the family he had enjoyed all the freedom and peace that he wanted. Several times, as usual, he had been on the point of astonishing the world with some great invention, but something was sure to happen to prevent it.

Ebenezer was glad to get back, and so was Dick, for he had got tired of the country and was glad to have a chance to go to school again. He wanted a change and now he was sure of it.

And so after a long absence at Long Branch, during which he had had a splendid time, we once more have Ebenezer Crow back in New York again.

MRS. PLUNKET with her family, of which Ebenezer Crow was of course a member, was now settled again in their Lexington avenue mansion after their summer stay at Long Branch.

Dick was going to school; the old professor was still trying to astonish the world with his great inventions and discoveries, and Assafidity Brown was once more the queen of a city kitchen.

The reader knows about how well Ebenezer had progressed in his love making with the sable wench, but still he did not despair or give up the hope of one day making her his wife.

And so matters stand as we start off with a new chapter.

It will be recollected that Ebenezer had been studying the dictionary considerably while at Long Branch for the purpose of astonishing the cook, and not having succeeded over and above well with her, he longed for a chance to try it on with Professor Dinglebus.

The old man, however, didn't think much of the darkey in general—regarding them as an inferior race—and of Ebenezer in particular, since he had been the instrument in Dick's hands of playing so many tricks on him. In fact, more than one great invention or discovery had been knocked into a cocked hat on his account.

But Eben wasn't very particular whether a person loved him or not. If he had a point to carry, he tried to carry it in one way or another, and knowing that the professor's weakness was flattery, he concluded to try him on that lay first.

He happened to go into his study one day soon after their return from the Branch, and thinking it as good a chance as he would probably have, he opened, although the old man wasn't much inclined to "mix" with him at first.

"Professor Dinglebus, you orter jus' been wid us down ter de Branch dis summer," said he.

"Bah!" was the old man's only reply, and he made it without looking up from his book.

"Had heaps er fun down dar."

"Bah!" as before.

"Heaps er company!"

"Bah! Mummeries!"

"Oh, no, seh; dar was seberal families dar besides de Mummeries."

"Pshaw! what has a man of science and brains got to do with such things? What would the world do for great inventions and discoveries if men of science lent themselves to fashionable follies in that way? No; the age in which I am living expects more of me than that."

"I hear numerous peoples spokin' 'bout yer down dar, sah."

"Eh? Did you, though?" he asked, becoming suddenly interested.

"Sartin, sah."

"Well—well, I am a public man, and of course they have a right to speak of me. It is a penalty of greatness, I suppose."

Probably nobody ever heard or spoke of him outside of his sister's family, but he imagined himself great and renowned, and Eben knew his weakness.

"Yes, sah; I wish dat I knowed half so much as you do."

"Oh, that's simply impossible. You belong to an inferior race. But I dare say you can improve yourself considerably."

"I s'pect so, sah, in de amphibiousness ob circumlocutions," said he, slinging in two of the biggest words he knew.

"What!" exclaimed the professor, starting in his seat, and opening his eyes.

"I war a-sayin', sah, dat if de concussions ob consanguinity radiate understandingly on de corpus rinktum ob my congeniality dat I may yet become some great man like yourself."

The old man was nearly paralyzed, and it was some moments before he could speak.

"Why, what on earth is the matter with you?"

"Been gettin' learnin', sah."

"Learning! I should say so. What have you been studying?"

"Dictionary, sah."

"Well, I should say so."

"You see, sah, dat I made up my mind fo' ter be a great man."

"And so you start off with great words."

"Yes, sah."

"Well, you had better learn how to use them."

"Lor' bress yer, sah, I can use heaps mo' ob 'em bigger'n dem."

"Well, don't, please; I can't stand them," said the professor, resuming his reading.

"I wish dat yer would teach me, sah."

"I haven't any time. My mind is full of great ideas and valuable discoveries. Get Dick to teach you, and commence at the lowest round of the educational ladder."

"By golly, boss, he frow me off dat ladder afo' I got half way up."

"Yes; I can't recommend him very highly. But don't disturb me now, I am on the point of working out a great invention that shall make my name a household word!" and he waved him from the room.

"Can't I help you, sah?"

"If I require your assistance, I'll call you."

"By golly, dat's what I call a snub," said he, as he went from the room.

In truth, he was disappointed because his big dictionary words failed to impress the old man, and he resolved to go all through that dictionary again and learn some bigger ones.

He told Dick of the conversation he had held with his uncle, and Dick told him that he must learn to use words three inches long before he could hope to

interest the old man, and he at once began to hunt through the book of words.

But Dick concluded that it was about time that he paid his respects to the old scientist, not having done so since his return to town, and so he rapped at his study door, and went in to see him at his work.

"Halloo, unc; how you was?" said he, merrily.

"I am well—and busy," was his short reply; for he wasn't half glad to see his mischievous nephew.

"That's good. Made any big inventions lately?"

"Yes. I have applied for five patents since you went away."

"Bully boy; oh, I heard lots of scientific old roosters talking about you down to the Branch."

"Did you, though?" he asked, brightening up.

"Of course; and it was a question with them which was the greatest inventor—you or Edison."

"You don't tell me so, Richard?"

"Yes, I'm giving it to you straight. They said that either one of you could invent anything you wanted to, from a rat-trap to a flying machine."

"Well, I guess they were about right," said the egotistic old man.

"And do you know, unc, that put an idea in my head."

"Indeed. Some mischief, I presume."

"Better than that; I want you to invent me a cat-trap."

"A what?" he asked, in astonishment.

"A cat-trap. We have all sorts of traps, with the exception of a cat-trap, and if ever there was a great invention of that kind needed it is now. Don't they disturb you nights out on the back fences?"

"They do, indeed, Richard, and if I were to tell the truth, they have worried many an idea out of my head by their confounded caterwauling."

"That's it; they are public nuisances, and the world looks to you to invent something that will suppress them. See?"

"Well, I—"

"I heard a man say the other day that you was the only person to do it, and if you didn't, he should apply to Professor Edison to try it."

"But I am in the midst of a great discovery."

"That's nothing; I've heard that Professor Edison often stops in the middle of some big thing and gets up a little one just to give his mind a rest."

"Is that so?"

"I'm giving it to you on a chalk line."

"Very well, I will invent a cat-trap."

"Bully for you. Get up something that will catch 'em alive! See?"

"Yes, I'll invent something for you."

"And if it sells you and I will whack up."

"Do what?" he asked, in surprise.

"Divy."

"What?"

"Go snacks."

"Why, Richard, what do you mean?"

"Mean! why, split the graft."

"Are you crazy?"

"No—no, the trouble is you arn't fly."

"Worse and worse. What is fly?"

"Being posted."

"Well, what were you trying to say?"

"Oh, we'll share the profits; see now?"

"Certainly. Why didn't you say so at first. You know I understand no slang. But I'll invent a trap for you if you'll promise not to play any more of your mischievous pranks on me."

"That's all right, unc, old man, and I'll kill Ebenezer if he attempts any of his rackets," said Dick, going from the room.

Now he was happy; for he had succeeded in getting the old man on a string, and if he failed to have some fun out of it you could shoot him.

One thing was certain, there was a large number of cats in that neighborhood, owned by the Lord knows who, and they indulged in all sorts of performances on the back fences nights, varying from an opera to a rough and tumble, and Dick had wished more than once that he could get them all on a string, provided the string went around each of their necks, and he could do the pulling.

So he was bound to have some fun out of the affair whether he got the cats or not.

And Professor Dinglebus concluded that the eyes of the world were on him in this cat-trap business, so he proceeded at once to concentrate his powerful mind upon the invention.

At the end of a week he had constructed a sort of box trap that could be set in back yards, and it really possessed great merits. In the first place it was baited with a hunk of meat placed inside of a wire cage, secured in such a way that the cats could smell of it, but in attempting to get at it they would spring the trap on themselves, and not be able to get at it even then.

But no sooner had it secured one cat than it set itself for another one. It was a sort of perpetual motion, provided there were cats enough to keep it going, and all the while those that had been caught were kept interested by smelling of and trying to get at the secured bait.

The first night that Dick set it he caught five, and those he allowed to remain in the trap until the next night. Strange to say, they kept remarkably quiet during the time, and amused themselves by smelling of the bait.

The professor was delighted, and considered himself a greater man than ever before.

By nine o'clock the next night they naturally felt lonesome, and when the other cats in the neighborhood came out and began to talk to each other about "our yard!" they sent up a howl of invitation for them to come and pay them a visit in their new patent house.

This invitation was promptly accepted, and the result was that fifteen more cats were caught in the trap before morning.

Dick meanwhile conceived of an idea that had fun in it, and with the assistance of Ebenezer, he proceeded to carry it out.

They got a large barrel half filled with straw, and into this they placed the cats. They fought and kicked up a devil of a rumpus for a few minutes, but presently becoming tangled up in the straw, they could fight no more and so remained perfectly quiet.

After getting them all in, and it was no slight job, they nailed up the head of the barrel, and tacked a card on it, directed to the professor.

He happened to be out at the time, and so they took the barrel up and left it in his study.

On his return, Ebenezer informed him that an expressman had left it for him.

"Oh, ah! a present from some of my scientific friends, I presume," said he, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "Some specimens most likely from Professor Wheeler. Get me a hatchet."

"Yes, sah," and Eben ran for it, returning with Dick and his dog.

"What have you got, unc?" asked Dick.

"Some scientific specimens, I suppose," said he.

"We scientists always remember each other."

The cats remained remarkably quiet when the old man proceeded to open the head of the barrel.

"Were there any charges by the expressman?"

"No, sah. All paid."

"Ah, yes, I might have known it, for we scientific people are very particular about such little things. But it was very thoughtful."

Just then Dick closed the door and the professor lifted out the head of the barrel.

The contents didn't need any lift; they came out themselves.

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed the professor, starting back in alarm, while Dick's black and tan made a dive for game.

A perfect stream of cats freed themselves from a straw and leaped out of the barrel.

Nip had all he could attend to, and a few more.

"Mercy—mercy!" cried the professor, dancing around the barrel to avoid the felines.

The cats flew around the room like mad, getting into every conceivable place for safety; climbing up the book-case; knocking over everything that wasn't cast iron or india rubber, and raising the devil generally.

"Help—help! take 'em away!" roared the old professor, as he saw his things going to smash.

"Sic 'em, Nip!" shouted Dick, while Eben danced around like a wild Indian.

Twenty cats in one room! If ever there was a racket, that was one.

Finally the professor made his way to the door and opened it. Instantly there was a flash, and a stream of yelling, spitting, hump-backed, big-tailed cats darted out and took refuge wherever they could find it all over the house.

But the yells of the cats were quickly drowned by the screams of the female members of the family, for Mrs. Plunket and her daughter, together with the servants, came to see what the matter was.

And they saw.

"Bress de Lord, it am a-rainin' cats," said the cook, and in a minute there was such an uproar that a person couldn't hear himself think.

Then followed the slamming and locking of several doors, and Nip was sailing in to have all the fun he could. Up stairs, down stairs, everywhere he hunted those cats, for it was the first time he had ever got a fair chance at them, and they had tempted him many a time before.

Ebenezer stood there laughing, with his mouth open as wide as a stove door, and flinging his arms around, when suddenly the exasperated professor seized a bottle of whiting that stood on his table, and broke it over his head, making a white man of him in three shakes of a pup's tail.

Dick didn't wait to see what the old man had reserved for him, but he lit out.

"Get out of here, you miserable black scoundrel!" shouted the professor. "Get out!"

"Oh—oh, I see gwine, sah," said Ebenezer, diving out into the entry and heading for the stairs which led down into the basement.

"And take that with you, you rascal!" said the enraged professor, kicking the barrel down after him.

Meantime the cats had found several openings and had regained their liberty, that is, those that Nip had not fixed so that they did not want any liberty, and in a little while the house was quiet again.

Then the women ventured out, and a demand was made for the meaning of it all.

As for the professor, he was so mad he couldn't keep his spectacles on, and he used all the scientific cuss words he could think of.

Then Mrs. Plunket called Ebenezer and sternly asked what it all meant.

"Don't know nuffin 'bout it, missus; Dick he tole me fo' ter take dat barrel up to de professor's study, an' so I did," said he.

"But where did he get all those cats?"

"Caught 'em in de professor's new trap."

"So—so, then you are to blame for this, are you?" said she, turning to her brother.

"I had nothing at all to do with it. One of my great inventions for catching cats was taken by Dick and made use of, and—"

"Fiddlesticks, sir! If you had made no trap there would have been no cats caught, that's certain; therefore I hold you responsible."

"Sister, you are a fool."

"Yes, for keeping you under my roof."

"But it was all the doings of that rascally son of yours, I tell you."

"Be careful, sir! Don't you dare to call my son a rascal, or your stay here is short," said she, manifesting considerable warmth.

"Yes, that's what I might have expected," said he, commencing to look dyspeptic.

"So you have a right to do. You are a shallow-pated man, and he is smart enough to see and take advantage of it. If you will play with boys, why, you must expect boys' play."

"Oh—oh—oh! Sit still, my bruised heart, sit still!" he cried, thumping his shirt bosom.

"Such a riot as this in my house!"

"Be patient, oh, my heart!" he moaned again, and then he disappeared into his room and contemplated the ruin that his inventive genius had wrought.

And so Dick and Eben got out of their scrape all right, and the blame of the whole thing was thrown upon the professor, who wanted dreadfully to tell Mrs. Plunket that either he or Dick had got to leave the house. But of course he didn't dare to, because he was simply living on the charity of his rich sister, and most likely would be obliged to do so until he became wealthy through some of his great inventions.

He didn't come to the table for three or four days, but pouted in his room and got cold victuals down in the kitchen from the cook.

But he got over it after awhile, or he thought he had, and so came to the table with the family, although he could not bear to hear anything said about those "specimens" sent by his scientific friends.

At the expiration of a week, however, the whole thing seemed to have been forgotten. Mrs. Plunket kept up her waltzing through society; Dick kept on going to school; the professor resumed his scientific studies; Ebenezer went on in his lazy, good-natured way, attending to his duties, and all was lovely and serene again.

But of course Dick could not remain long without having a racket of some sort or other, and the reason that he was not heard from oftener at home was because he found so many opportunities for sport among his schoolfellows.

One day, however, he found another curiosity in the shape of a little colored dwarf boy who had no home, and as he was exceedingly smart and precocious, Dick took a great fancy to him.

The little coon was probably ten years of age; but he was so small and youthful-looking that he would not have been taken for more than five. The little fellow could sing and dance like a trooper, and Dick resolved to take him home with him.

But that was not all. He made up his mind to have some fun with Ebenezer; and so, after winning the boy's confidence, he named him Jim Crow, and then taught him his lesson.

He had previously had an understanding with the cook about it.

And so little "Jim Crow" was taken home, and held his first reception in the kitchen.

"Whar yer get dat little chunk ob Injun-rubber?" asked Eben, going into the kitchen where he was.

"Don't speak to me, sir!" said Dick, savagely.

"What dat you say, Dicky?"

"Go away from me, I tell you!"

"What de matter wid you?"

"Ask Miss Brown," said he, pointing to the cook.

"Don't yer come 'round heah or I broke yer jaw fo' yer, yer big fool nigger!" said she, savagely.

"Good golly! am both ob you chaps off yer cabase ter-day?" he inquired, looking curiously from one to the other.

"Ebenezer Crow, you am a base deceiver!"

"That's so," chimed Dick.

"Who I deceibe?"

"Me!" she said, springing towards him with an uplifted rolling pin.

"Don't kill him; let the law do that!"

"Oh, but how de law mend my feelings?"

"Am your feelinks fractured, hney?"

"Don't dare to speak to me, you bad nigger!"

"What am de matter?"

"You are a bad man, Mr. Crow!" said Dick.

"By golly! I am bad at understandin' what yer am 'tudin' to. What hab all dis yer ter do wid dat yer little coon?" he asked, pointing to the boy.

"Oh, my reputation!" said Assafidity, sadly.

"What am de matter wid it? Got der cramps in it?"

She raised the rolling pin again.

"Don't kill him!" shouted Dick. "Of course he richly deserves death, for any man does who deserts a wife and family, and goes around as a single man. But let the law work on him."

"What am de matter, I tole yer?" he asked, again.

"Jim," said Dick, addressing the boy, "who is that big colored man?" and he pointed to Ebenezer.

"Dat am my farder, sah," said he, quickly.

Ebenezer nearly tumbled down.

"Oh, you wretch! you base deceiver!" cried the cook.

"Don't deny him, Sneezzer, for he looks just like you," said Dick.

"Oh, farder!" exclaimed little Jim. "How could you go run 'way from us like dat?"

"Go 'way from me; I don't know you!" said he, rushing from the kitchen.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HERE, come back here!" shouted Dick.

"Come back heah, farder!" said little Jim Crow.

"Better go drown yerself!" added Miss Brown.

Ebenezer returned cautiously to the kitchen.

"Come back here, and face the music. Why don't you acknowledge your kid?"

"Oh, you's a-kidding me, Dicky!"

"Not much. This little fellow says that his name is Jim Crow, and that you are his father."

"Dat am a pugnacious lie. I neber war a farder in my life," said Ebenezer.

"Oh, you crocodile!" exclaimed Miss Brown.

"What am de tribulation wid yer, honey?"

"Don't you dare call me no sweetmeats, you big, bad nigger! Go 'way!"

"Arn't you ashamed of yourself, Sneezzer?"

"Farder, don't you know me?" asked the kid, going towards him.

Ebenezer Crow looked down at the diminutive edition of Crow.

"What am de matter wid you?" he asked, at length.

"I'm bustin' fo' my farder."

"Den why don't yer go find him?"

"He has found him," said Dick.

"Oh, you bad man! An' you try fo' ter make lub ter me. Luf me at him!" she exclaimed.

"Hold on, cook, hold on! Don't kill him yet! Let him recognize his son, and make a confession first," said Dick, rushing towards the seemingly-irate girl, who stood with uplifted rolling-pin in her hand ready to smash him.

"Please don't kill my fader!" said the kid.

"What am de matter wid yer all?" asked Ebenezer, gazing from one to the other.

"How can you ask?" and Dick pointed to the comical little coon.

"Waal, what dat got fer ter do wid me?"

"Farder, don't yer know me?"

"Get out! What yer gib me, hey?"

"Too thin, old man, too thin! Own up now, and take the boy to your bosom, or you will be out of a job in less than an hour," said Dick.

"Goodness gracious! What am de matter? I don't know nuffin 'bout dis yer kid."

"Oh, you wretch!"

"Oh, Sneezzer!"

"Oh, farder!"

"Go 'way from me, I tole yer! I don't know nuffin 'bout yer!"

"All right. That settles you."

"Amn't you my farder?"

"No! I neber had a farder; neber was a farder, an' neber 'spect ter be a farder. Go 'way from me wid yer foolin'!"

"You'll be arrested before night."

"Serve him right," said Miss Brown.

"They'll whack him into jail."

"Dar's whar he belongs."

"Don't yer know me, farder?" put in the kid, employing the most mournful tone of voice and the most appealing look, as Dick had instructed him.

"Don't I tole yer dat I neber had a fader? If yer don't go 'way an' luf me alone, I broke yer all ter pieces. You heah?"

Ebenezer was beginning to get his back up.

"See how much he looks like you," said Dick.

"Puffect image, only I hope he won't make suok a bad man," said the cook.

"Farder, don't yer know me?"

"Go 'way from me all ob yer or I harm yer."

"Hark! Here comes mammy. Now look out."

"Oh, Lord! I say, Dicky, what am yer little game?" he asked, appealingly.

"Your little kid. Own him or I'll give you away to mammy, and then it will be one—two—three, bounce. What do you say?"

"Oh, Dicky, I don't know nuffin 'bout it."

"Yes, you do. Own him or I'll squeal."

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned.

"What do you say?"

"I won't live in de house wid him if he don't own dat chile," put in the cook.

"Own up or out you go!"

"Don't yer know me, fader?"

"Yes—yes. Don't say a word 'bout it," said he, glancing anxiously towards the door where he expected to see Mrs. Plunket enter.

But she didn't come, and Dick knew that she would not, but he wanted to frighten him into owning that the black waf was his child for the sake of the fun he might have afterwards.

"Oh, farder, dat's all right," said the kid, going up to him. "Kiss me, farder."

Ebenezer looked wildly around, and after listening for a moment and making sure that his mistress was not coming, he raised his foot for the purpose of kicking that kid up through the roof of the house.

"Hold on, Sneezzer!" cried Dick.

"Hold nuffin. Yer been playin' roots on me, an' I won't have it. Git out or I harms yer."

"Oh, farder!"

"Git out or I feed de chickens wid yer."

"Better feed him," suggested the cook.

"That lets you out, Sneezzer."

"Dicky, I tole yer dat I amn't dat sort ob a man. Dat amn't my chile."

"Too thin."

"What! Didn't yer jus' say dat he war yours?"

"Go clean 'way from me, I tole yer. I neber had a chile in my life."

"Well, I'll tell you how to get out of it without being bounced. Adopt him."

"But don't dat go 'g'in my character?"

"Not a bit. Adopt him as young Jim Crow and everything will be lovely."

"Dat am de least he can do," said the cook.

"An' you fo'give me if I 'dopt him?" he asked, turning to her.

"Yes, if yer don't try ter make spoons wid me."

"Oh, honey, I's as innocent as a lamb."

"A healthy old lam' you is," said she, laughing.

"What do you say?" demanded Dick.

"All right, I 'dopt him."

"Oh, farder!"

"Now mind yer. I's only your farder fo' little while."

"Dat's all right. Shake," said the little black rascal, reaching up his hand to big Ebenezer.

And so it was settled, although he hardly knew how, and young Jim Crow was adopted. But more by Dick

than Ebenezer, however, for he had taken a great fancy to the little coon, as a fellow might take a fancy to a goat or any other pet, and he resolved to keep him in the house unbeknown to his mother, for the sake of the fun he might have with him.

So he made arrangements with the cook to feed him at her table in the kitchen, and do her best to keep him out of the sight of his mother and sister.

And a comical little fellow he proved to be. In fact, Ebenezer himself took so much stock in him that he thought of little else, and spent all of his leisure in his company.

Dick had had a most funny dress made for the kid—something like the funny song-and-dance costumes seen on the stage sometimes, and to the music of Eben's banjo and Dick's clappers, he would dance in a most entertaining way for their amusement.

And so for nearly a month Dick kept his little two-legged comicality in the house without his mother finding it out, during which he enjoyed any quantity of fun, and occasionally worked a little racket on Ebenezer with him.

In this the little fellow took as much delight as Dick did, if not more, and he was always ready to take a hand in it.

One afternoon, Dick conceived a way to have some extra fun, and so after making arrangements with an acquaintance living away across town, he proceeded to make little Jim Crow into a neat-looking bundle, leaving a convenient hole so that he could breathe, and then he placed a shawl-strap around it in such an ingenious manner that no one would ever have suspected that it was anything but a very innocent bundle, indeed.

"Sneezzer, come here!" he called, after he had got everything fixed; "I want you."

"All right, Dicky, I'm comin'," he replied.

"Now keep mum, Jim, and do just as I have told you, and I'll give you a quarter," he added, speaking to the "bundle."

"All right, boss; I understand," said the kid.

"What am it, Dicky?" asked Ebenezer, coming into the kitchen where Dick had arranged the job in the presence of the servants.

"I want you to take this letter and bundle over to Mrs. Rose. Give her the letter, and then follow her instructions. Hurry up, now, and here is a quarter to wet your whistle with."

"All right, Dicky, I'll do it, for my whistle am as dry as a camp-meetin' constitution-box," said he, meaning contribution-box.

"Be very careful of the bundle, for it has got some very fragile articles in it, and just look out that no body gets it away from you."

"Don't be 'fraid, chile; I'll look out fo' it."

"All right, and don't you make any mistake."

"Oh, see me!" he exclaimed, catching up the bundle by the strap handle. "See me jus' spoil dis yer quarter. Don't yer wish dat yer war a gwine 'long wid me, Miss Assafidity?" he asked, addressing the cook, who stood observing him with a grin.

"No, don't want nuffin' ter do wid yer," said she, spitefully.

"All right; I guess I can spoils dis yer cash widout yer."

"Guess you can; you spoil 'bout everything dat yer gets a hold on."

"Did I ever spoil you, honey?"

"No, fo' yer neber got a hold on me yet, and I don't mean dat you eber shall."

"Oh, go 'long, sweetness."

"Go 'long yerself."

"I's gwine."

"Well, see that you do," said Dick; and away went Ebenezer, whistling merrily.

They watched him as he went down the street, and enjoyed a hearty laugh at the way the joke began.

Ebenezer was very fond of his beer, so the first saloon he came to he marched in for the purpose of looking through the bottom of a lager beer glass.

Placing his bundle upon a table, he sat down and called for a glass of beer.

A glass of beer was brought and placed before him.

Little Jim Crow happened to be placed so that he could see what was going on.

"Here's luck," said he.

Ebenezer was about to raise the glass to his mouth, but on hearing this he set it down on the table again and looked around.

There was no person in the room but the bartender, and he was quite a distance away.

"Who dat, I wonder?" he muttered, and stooping down he looked under the table. "By golly! I fink dat I heah somebody speak. Guess dat beer-jerker tryin' fo' ter git me off," he added, as he again lifted the mug of beer to his lips.

"Here's luck!" said Jim, again.

Ebenezer rolled the whites of his eyes over toward the bartender, who was busily and honestly engaged in wiping off the bar.

He frowned to think that a mere German beer-flipper should be so familiar with him, and once more he raised it to his lips.

"Whoa, Einmal!" called the kid.

"Will you be so good as to go to de debil?" he asked, after drinking the beer; and he looked at the innocent bartender.

"Yaw," was the response, and going over to the table where Ebenezer sat, he took the glass and filled it up again.

Eben looked at him in surprise.

"Who axed yer fo' mo' beer?" said he.

"Beer is goot," said the Dutchman.

"So is cheek," muttered Eben, as he lifted the glass, thinking that the least said was the soonest mended.

"Go it, sucker!" said the kid.

Ebenezer set down his glass, and looked at the Dutchman very savagely.

"Who am dat you chuck reflections at?"

"Hey?" asked the innocent barkeeper.

"Better tone down dat chin ob yours, or I get up an' make you sick," said he.

"Hey?"

"Who you call sucker?"

"Yaw!"

"I put a nose on you putty quick, if you don't mind your eye."

"Dot vas goot peer, yah," said the Dutchman, not understanding him.

"Big loafer," he growled, again raising the glass to the dry opening in his face.

"Pay for dat peer," said the "bundle," imitating the tone of the Dutchman as well as he could.

Ebenezer drank the second glass and then approached the bar in high dudgeon.

"Am dat de way you treat gemmen?" he demanded.

"Yaw; dreat 'em mit peer."

"An' lip."

"Den cent," said the Dutchman, thinking he wanted to settle.

"You poo' ignorant Dutchman, don't you fink dat I hab de cash ter pay?" said he, throwing his quarter out upon the bar.

Without a word the man handed back the change.

"You am a fool," said Eben, turning away in disgust.

"Yaw, it be cool."

Eben caught up the "bundle," and without a word left the saloon, growling.

Feeling much refreshed, although indignant, he continued his way towards the house of the lady to whom he had been sent.

Arriving there, he delivered the letter according to instructions, and according to the understanding she wrote another letter and sent him away across town with the heavy bundle.

From here he was sent back home again.

"Tell Mrs. Plunket—well, never mind, this letter will explain all," said the person, handing him a neatly-folded letter.

"Am it a mistake?" he asked, wiping the perspiration from his glistening mug.

"Yes; but this letter will explain it all," said the lady, smiling.

"By golly, it am no joke," said he, picking up the bundle again.

"Well, here is a quarter for you."

"Thank you, missus, dat will make it lighter."

"Yes, but see that it don't make your hand lighter," she said, laughing.

"I am a temperance man, missus."

"I am glad to hear it. Give my respects to your mistress," and she showed him to the door.

During this time young Jim Crow had managed to work his head out at one end of the bundle, and as Ebenezer hurried along towards home, watching for the next lager beer saloon, he attracted the attention of several gamins upon the street, and in half of no time there was a crowd following him.

"Stop him!" shouted the kid.

"Stop him!" shouted several others, and at the same time a few rotten apples and tomatoes struck his head.

He stopped and attempted to remonstrate.

"Stop him—he's a kidnapper!" some one shouted.

"He's the chap that stole Charley Ross."

"He's going to drown his kid!"

"Police!"

By this time the crowd had become so large that there was no show for his facing it, and regarding it as hostile to him on account of his color, he started down the street as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

In the meantime, the mischievous kid had worked his arm out, and as Ebenezer was running for dear life, he brought his thumb up to his nose and wiggled his fingers at his pursuers.

"Police!"

"Stop him!"

"Shoot him!" shouted the crowd.

The louder they shouted the faster Ebenezer ran, evidently thinking that they intended to mob him, but not noticing the cause of all his trouble.

But when the stones, clubs and rotten fruit began to fly around him, the kid drew in his head and got out of sight.

A policeman soon joined in the chase and overhauled him.

"Take him in!"

"He's got Charley Ross!"

"He's a kidnapper!"

"Kill him!" and various other epithets were hurled against him.

"Hold on. What's the matter?" demanded the officer, seizing him by the collar.

"I—I—" stammered Ebenezer.

"Take him in!"

"What have you been doing?"

"Tryin' fo' ter get away from de crowd."

"But what for? What have you got in that bundle?" asked the officer, hitting it with his club.

"Oh!" yelled the kid.

"Come along. I'll see what's the matter," and seizing him with a firmer grip, he started him towards the station house.

"Hol' on, boss, hol' on. Lemme take dis yer home ter Mrs. Plunket fust," said he.

"What Mrs. Plunket?"

"Down heah at 59. It's precious an' she wants it drefful."

"What has she to do with you?"

"I work fo' her, boss."

"Run him in! He's got a stolen kid."

"Boss, I don't know nuffin' 'bout what they say. It's a nice man. Took me to de house and find out all 'bout me."

"All right. Come along."

The crowd followed, and by this time it had swelled to at least a thousand persons, shouting and howling all sorts of things at him. They followed clear to the front stoop of Mrs. Plunket's house, and there remained howling while the officer took Eben into the house.

Dick and the servants were watching, but laying low to see how the thing would work.

"What on earth does this all mean?" asked Mrs. Plunket, as Ebenezer was dragged into her presence.

"Do you know this person?" asked the officer.

"Why, to be sure I do. He is my servant."

"What has he got in the bundle?"

"How should I know. What is it, Ebenezer?"

"Oh, missus, dat letter will tell you all 'bout it," he groaned, handing it to her.

Dick now made his appearance, while Miss Brown and the other servants listened outside.

Mrs. Plunket opened the letter and read:

"DEAR MADAME: Your son is evidently playing a trick on your colored servant, and thinking it best to help it along by sending him towards you, I return him, much obliged for the amusement he has afforded us. Yours, truly,
"MRS. SHEPPARD."

"But that does not explain the bundle," said the policeman. "I must see what it contains," said he, setting it upon the table, and commencing to unstrap it, while Mrs. Plunket and family looked on in perfect amazement.

"Look out, dar," shouted the kid, whereat all, even the officer, started back.

"Mercy, what's that?"

"Look out fo' my eye!"

Eben was as much amazed as anyone.

"Look out for your own eye, den!" again shouted the kid. "Lemme out!"

"Let's see about this," said the officer, once more going for the bundle.

"Ebenezer, I am astonished!" said Mrs. Plunket.

"I am paralyzed, missus," he replied.

"What does it mean?"

The kid was yelling like a stuck pig.

"I gibs it up. Ax Dicky."

"Richard, what is this—"

At that moment the officer finished undoing his bundle, and up leaped young Jim Crow, while all hands not in the secret screamed.

"What's this?" asked the officer.

"Tell me, an' I gib yer half," said the kid, dancing a step or two upon the table.

"Mercy—mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Plunket.

"Who are you?" demanded the puzzled policeman.

"Me? I'm Jim Crow."

"Well—well, I declare! Ebenezer, how is this?" demanded perplexed Mrs. Plunket, turning to Ebenezer, who by this time had lost his expression of astonishment, and was now laughing.

"I guess Dicky know. Oh, you young rascal, you! What fo' you do dat?" he asked.

"Do what?" demanded Dick, savagely.

"Make me lug dat kid 'bout ten miles."

"I don't know anything about you and your kid."

"Don't go back on me, farder," said Jim.

"Oh, you horrid little thing, who and what are you?" Mrs. Plunket asked, going towards the table.

"It's young Jim Crow. Dar am my farder," said he, pointing to Ebenezer, whose mug had again changed its expression.

"Git out, you little chunk ob injy-rubber."

"Don't go back on me, farder. You know dat you war gwine fo' ter frow me inter de water."

"Ah—hal!" exclaimed the officer, seizing him.

"Hold a moment. Explain this, Ebenezer," said Mrs. Plunket.

"Missus, so help me gracious, it am a job dat Dicky put up on me."

"Get out. Ask the kid," said Dick, indignantly.

"How is it?" asked the officer of the boy.

"He war gwine fo' ter frow me in de river so dat nobody would know dat he war married."

"That settles it," said Dick.

"Ebenezer, I am astonished."

"So am I, Mrs. Plunket."

"Come along. I'll fix you where you won't attempt to get away with any more children," said the officer, snaking him towards the door.

"Dicky, a joke am a joke, but don't luf 'em take me off," said he appealingly.

"Serves you right."

"Oh, Miss Assafidity, save me!"

"Serves you jus' right," said she, turning away.

"Take off his livery. I will not be disgraced," said Mrs. Plunket, joining in against him, and before he knew it the officer had nearly stripped him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TAKING Ebenezer in custody the officer ordered Dick to bring young Jim Crow along as a witness against him, and amid many lamentations and appeals he started with him towards the door.

"Hould on!" exclaimed the Irish servant, who knew the racket, and thought it had gone far enough. "It's all a joke, so it is."

"What is a joke?" demanded the officer.

"The kid an' Ebenezer, sure; Dick put it up on him, so he did."

"Impossible," said Mrs. Plunket, who for the first time in her life began to suspect that her colored servant was not what he ought to be.

"It's true for me, ma'am."

"But where did this child come from?"

"Sure, Dick has had him here in the house for a long toime, hid away loike a billy goat."

They all turned towards Dick, and the young rascal,

no longer able to keep his face, burst into a loud laugh, and admitted the truth of the story.

The officer was disgusted, and ramming his club into his belt, he shot out of the house.

"Richard Plunket, explain this dreadful thing!" said his mother, severely.

"Oh, missus, he am a drufful bad boy!" said Ebenezer, again getting into his clothes.

"Well, mammy, you see I wanted a little fun, and as you would not let me go to the circus, why, I thought I would have a little one here myself."

"Oh, I am astonished!"

"Jus' think ob me, missus," protested Eben.

"It is shameful. Where did you get this colored child, Richard?"

"Oh, I found him," replied Dick, laughing.

"Found him! Where?"

"On the street."

"But who does he belong to?"

"I give it up, mammy. Who do you belong to, Jim?" he asked, turning to the kid, who stood there rolling his eyes from one person to another.

"I gubs it up, boss. 'Spect dat I growed in de gutter somewhere," said he.

"And you brought him here, Richard?"

"Yes; I thought I could dress him up, give him something to eat, and have some fun with him."

"And how came he in this bundle?"

"I tole ye, missus. Dicky, he say ter me dat he wanted me fo' to carry a bundle up town, an' he gub me a quarter fo' de job. I didn't know what war in de bundle, an' so I take it to one place wid a letter, an' day send me to annuder place wid a letter, 'til I carry dat kid all ober town putty neah, an' bime-by 'pears dat he get he head out ob de bundle, an' folks began to race, an' say dat I stole a child. Den a policeman took me heah, an' you know de rest."

"Shameful," said Mrs. Plunket, smiling, though, in spite of herself, while Rose and the others laughed heartily.

"Shameful! I should say so, missus. Dat was de wus trick dat war eber played on me, an' I gibs notice dat I shall resenticate it," said indignant Ebenezer, walking from the room.

"Richard, I am astonished at you. When will you cease your mischief with Ebenezer?" said his mother, earnestly.

"Well, what's a fellow going to do? There's lots of fun in him, and why not get it out?"

"I will not permit it," said she, for about the fiftieth time, as he very well knew.

"All right, I'll hold up my hands."

"Do what?"

"I'll tumble."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, I'll let up."

"Richard, you know I dislike to hear you use slang. What a curious little negro boy. What in the world possessed you to bring him here?"

"Oh, he's better than Tom Craig's billy goat."

"Well, you must take him right away, I will not have him in the house."

"Oh, let him stay until he finds somewhere to go," said Dick.

"Don't heave me," said Jim.

"Take him to the station house and let the police provide for him."

Dick thought he would consider it awhile, for he hadn't squeezed half of the fun out of the little pickaninny yet, and so he took him down stairs to the kitchen where the servants were chaffing Eben.

"How'd I know what war in de bundle?" he was just asking Miss Assafidity Brown, the cook.

"How'd you know! Didn't I allus tell yer dat you war a big fool nigger! Go 'way; a cat would fool you any day," said she.

"Halloo, Sneezer, here's your bundle," said Dick.

Then they all laughed again, and little Jim danced a breakdown.

"Mr. Richard Plunket," said Ebenezer, with great seriousness, "dat am de las' time dat you will play any mo' ob you foolin' wid me, an' I gibs yer fair warnin' dat I shall broke yer all ter pieces de fus' time dat I catches yer lone."

"What's the matter with you? What are you kicking about?" demanded Dick.

"Oh, you know all 'bout it."

"Of course I do. Didn't I pay you for taking the bundle? Pull down your vest, and give your mouth a rest. I gave you a quarter for taking the bundle, and if you got into any trouble that was no fault of mine."

"But you put up de job on me."

"Nonsense; I only wanted to give little Jim a ride, that's all."

"But you put up de job dat he war my chile. How dat?"

"Well, wasn't he yours while you had him in charge? Of course he was."

"But you let de hossifer arrest me."

"Well, it served you right for not delivering the goods in shape."

"Dicky, dar am no use in argerfyin' de subjec' wid per. But I gubs yer fair warnin' dat yer hab play you las' joke on me."

"Is that so? Going to murder me, eh?"

"Dat's all right."

"Why don't you go for Miss Brown? She and I put up the job together."

"Dicky, she am a female woman, an' de man dat lifts his han' ter a woman, save in an act of kindness, will steal sheep, as Mr. Shakespeare says. Miss Brown, I forgibs yer," said he, with a lofty wave of his hand.

"Whew! You's awful good," said she.

"I fo'gibs yer; but it break de cords ob our friendship, shuah."

"It won't take much ter do dat."

"I fo'gibs yer."

"All right, if you'll only keep 'way from me I won't object."

And so the matter dropped for the time being, and everybody went about their duties.

But Ebenezer was a pouty, grouty, sore coon, for he didn't relish being laughed at by everybody in the house, and while his mad made him the sorest, he actually thought how he could murder his young tormentor.

As for little Jim Crow, Dick did not hand him over to the police, but left him with the cook as before, thinking that he might find some place where he could live in a family.

But the next day while Dick was at school, his mother went into the kitchen for something or other and found him there, and so she sent for a policeman and had him taken away.

Dick was vexed when he found it out, and resolved to get his fun out of somebody else.

But a week passed without the happening of anything particular, although Ebenezer had not shed Dick's blood in that time, and was even beginning to get on sociable terms again, just as he had done dozens of times before.

One day, not long after this event, Ebenezer got himself into a little snap, and this was how it happened.

Mrs. Plunket sent him to a drug store to get a dose of castor oil for some member of the family who needed it, and as she dealt almost entirely with one store, of course the clerks knew Ebenezer.

"Drefffal nasty stuff fo' ter take," he muttered, while the oil was being put up.

"Do you think so?"

"By golly, yes. I tooked some once when I war a pickaninny, an' I don't want any mo'."

"Remember it yet, eh?"

"You is right I do. Neber heah de confounded stuff mentioned dat I don't taste it in my mouf."

A bright idea struck that drug clerk.

"Well, that's because you didn't know how to take it. You can't taste it when it is properly given. Have a glass of soda, Ebenezer?" he asked, suddenly.

"Waal, I don't whistle agin it much."

"I believe I owe you a treat," and he went to the soda fountain in the front of the shop. "What kind of syrup do you prefer?"

"Gimme a drop ob gooseberry."

"What? There is no gooseberry syrup. You probably mean raspberry or strawberry," said the clerk, laughing.

"All right; make it strawberry."

The clerk drew a little of the syrup into the glass, and then secretly placed the castor-oil in with it, after which he filled the glass with soda and placed it before him.

Being thirsty, as he was always sure to be, if anybody was treating, he put himself outside of it at a breath.

"By golly, dat am refreshin'. But it 'pears like I neber taste any strawberries like dat."

"Oh, of course it doesn't taste the same with the soda, but people like it very much."

"It am bery nice," but the expression on his face didn't indicate that he thought so.

"How is Dick?"

"Oh, jus' as full ob de debil as eber."

"Plays a good many tricks on you, eh?"

"He am a bad egg. But I must be goin'."

"All right."

"Whar am dat caster ile?"

"Why, you have taken it," said the clerk, laughing.

"What dat you say?"

"I tole you it wasn't so bad to take if it was only given properly. You took it in the soda."

"In de soda?"

"Yes, to be sure, and never knew it."

"Great Moses, boss!" he exclaimed, starting back with his big eyes wide open.

"What of it?"

"Why, dat ile wasn't fo' me!"

"It wasn't?"

"No, you ninny, it was fo' somebody else!"

The clerk laughed heartily.

"Well, you have taken it, anyhow."

"What de matter wid you? Don't yer know nuffin' 'tall scarcely?" he asked, indignantly.

"Why, I understood that you wanted it for yourself. Why don't you talk plainly?"

"If I talk dat way I tole yer dat yer a fool. Now wha' de matter wid me?"

"Oh, it won't hurt you much, only you had better be getting home," said he, laughing.

"Hurry up and gib me dat ile as I tole you to," said Ebenezer, impatiently.

"All right," and he proceeded to put it up.

"Big gallot!"

"Here you are," said he, handing it to him.

Ebenezer seized the vial and started for home as fast as his fat legs would carry him, while the clerk laughed so loud that people passing on the street thought he had made an extra dollar.

But a sicker man than Ebenezer Crow was it would have been hard to find.

He arrived home out of breath, and with his bowels tearing around and twisting like snakes on exhibition at a country fair.

First he would groan, and then he would swear, and everybody in the house thought he was stark mad.

"What is the matter, Ebenezer?" asked Mrs. Plunket, with considerable anxiety.

"Oh, Lord, I guess I's got de cholera morguson," he groaned.

"What have you been eating?"

"Oh, Lord!" and again he doubled up.

"Let me send for Doctor Cameron."

"No—no, I guess dat I come all right bime-by," and he made a dive for down stairs.

Well, the poor devil didn't experience the last of that joke until some time the next day. But he kept his own counsel; for in addition to his physical suffering, he didn't care about being laughed at by those around him.

But the joke was too good for the drug clerk to keep all to himself, and so the next time he saw Dick he told him all about it.

And Ebenezer looked as though he had been driven through a sewer. Now if anybody proposes to treat him to soda, he will kick like a mule.

Dick everlastingly tormented him about it, and of course what he knew he told the cook, and before long the whole family knew all about it.

"Don't dat prove dat you is a fool, nigger?" asked Miss Brown, who delighted in tormenting him as much as Dick did.

"Miss Brown, dar am no occasion fo' you ter concert de oar ob your observation inter der matter," said he, loftily.

"Yah—yah—yah! How you feel now?"

"I hab de dignification ob feelin' 'bove you."

"Better feel 'roun' fo' anodder glass ob soda."

"Miss Brown, dar am one thing dat I feel," said he, severely.

"What am dat—castor oil?"

"I feel happy dat you amn't my wife."

"By golly, so do I."

Ebenezer attempted to reply, but finding that she was too much for him, he withdrew as gracefully as he could, and smothered the sorrow in his heart.

"But you can't lay that joke to me, can you?" said Dick, after laughing at him.

"No, Dicky, it wasn't a joke; it war only a mistake, dat's all."

"Yes; but I wasn't in it, was I?"

"No, Dicky, no; it war dat stupid, fresh pill-roller dat did it," said he, sadly.

"And that lets me out?"

"Yes."

"Well, chalk down a mark for me."

Poor Eben! He felt like chalking his head and butting the stuffing out of that drug clerk.

But fortunately he was one of those fellows who do not remember trouble long, and in this instance, just as soon as he had recovered from the effects of the castor oil, he began to be himself once more, although it took longer than usual this time.

We mustn't forget the old Professor Dinglebus.

The cat-trap which he had invented for Dick, and which had occasioned him so much trouble, as will be remembered, produced a breach between him and the family that took a whole fortnight to heal over, during which time he had kept himself locked in his study, where he spent his time brooding over the mischief produced by the cats, and in concocting new inventions.

One day he received a complimentary invitation for himself and family to visit the Aquarium, and take a look at the fishy wonders of the deep there to be seen; and regarding it as a compliment to his greatness, he persuaded his sister, Mrs. Plunket, to go, and take both both Rose and Dick along.

Dick and Rose were both delighted, and so Mrs. Plunket concluded to go in style.

While in the city, Ebenezer no longer acted as coachman, but simply as house servant and waiter on the table, while a lordly and very bossy Englishman was installed as coachman.

And so they were driven to the Aquarium one Saturday afternoon, Ebenezer on the box with the driver, and the other members of the family in the carriage.

It was the first time the professor had ridden in the carriage for a long time, and he felt so big that there seemed to be danger of his bursting; and he was so full of big scientific words, that there was no such a thing as understanding him, which was, after all, a very fortunate thing for the others, perhaps.

On arriving at the building, Ebenezer hastened to open the carriage door and assist them out, after which he took a couple of cloaks upon his arm and followed the party in.

It was a very swell affair, and of course attracted quite considerable attention.

The professor announced himself, and presented his ticket. One of the learned attendants at once took him in tow, and piloted the party around among the tanks, explaining the marvels of the deep to them, although he could scarcely get in a word edgewise on account of the old man's loquacity.

All this interested them for a time, but tiring at length of the professor's explanations and arguments with the attendants, they wandered off by themselves and allowed the two men to have it out alone.

As for Ebenezer Crow, he was almost dazed by the many wonders he saw there, and of course Dick took him in tow and explained things to him in imitation of the professor, which created many laughs among those who happened to be near them, although Eben took it all in sober earnest.

"Dicky, whar dey catch 'em?" he asked, after viewing the thousands of different fish.

"Oh, in different parts of the world. They have men out fishing all the time for whales and porgies."

"Whar am de whales, Dicky?"

"Oh, their keepers have got them out in the North river giving them exercise."

"By golly. How dat?"

"Oh, they just let 'em swim until they get tired and then bring 'em back here to blow."

"Guess you am blowin' a little, Dicky."

"Not much. Ask the people here."

At length Dick came to the tank where the electric eels are kept. He had often read about these wonderful creatures, but these were the first he had ever seen.

They possess a shocking power that is marvelous, and in their native rivers in South America they often attack cattle who venture into the water and kill them. The electric shock which one of these eels can discharge will often prostrate a man.

This is their only method of defense or of securing their prey. To look at they are not unlike other eels, though somewhat thicker in body, and when not in search of food they lie almost dormant on the bottom.

The professor told him all about them in the most high flown language, and after he had gone to another part of the building, Dick beckoned to Ebenezer to come and see them.

"Musical eels," said he, pointing to them.

"Musical eels! I have heard tell 'bout musical moaks, but dat am de fus' time dat I heah 'bout musical eels. What instrument they play on, Dicky?"

"On, all kinds, but their strong point is singing."

"Go 'way, chile! Eel sing! What am de nature ob de taffy dat you gib me?"

"No taffy. Ask the professor."

"Am dat so fo' shuah?"

"True bill."

"Eel sing; well, by golly, dat beats mermaids," said he, with a little laugh.

"Why, they go around with mermaids in the water and sing for them. Fact; ask the professor."

"Golly, I should like to hear 'em sing."

"Well, you can. They just gave me a tune."

"Go 'way!"

"Fact. 'My Grandfather's Clock,' and it was bully."

"Dicky, I flink dat you am givin' me moonlight."

"Not much. Put in your finger and stir them up just as I did."

"Dat make 'em sing?"

"To be sure. Tell them the song you want, and then tickle their tails with your finger."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, ask the professor. It won't take you long to find out, at all events. Try it."

Ebenezer was incredulous, but Dick was so serious, and he had already seen so many marine wonders that he was prepared for almost anything.

"I good mind ter. Wonder if dey will sing 'Ole Log Cabin in de Lane' fo' me?"

"Of course they will. Hurry up now while there is nobody looking, for the people here don't like to have them meddled with too much for fear they will lose their voices."

Eben looked carefully around, and seeing none of the attendants in sight, he rolled up his sleeves and made ready.

"'Ole Log Cabin in De Lane,' please," said he.

He pushed his hand down into the water until he touched one of the electric eels, and the next instant he yelled and turned a complete summersault, knocking over the tank, and spilling the eels on the floor.

In an instant there was the wildest excitement on all sides. Professor Dinglebus, who had come up just then, made a dive to save one of the eels, while an attendant did the same.

The professor dropped his eel and tumbled over like a segar store Indian. And so did the other man, and it wasn't until the eels had spent their power, that they could be picked up and placed in another tank.

But it was a "shocking" bad case all around.

"Whar am dat 'Ole Log Cabin in De Lane,' Dicky?" asked Ebenezer, with a bewildered look.

"I guess it was struck by lightning," replied Dick.

"I guess it war, an' I got a taste ob it myself. What war it, anyhow?"

"Oh, you touched him too hard and he exploded. But you'll have to pay for this tank."

Ebenezer groaned. So did the professor, who was just recovering from his shock, while Mrs. Plunket was "shocked" to know that her servant, whom she brought there to show off, had shown off so effectually that she had to pay twenty-five dollars for it.

The professor was sick; he wanted to go home, and so did the others, and they went soon after, Ebenezer receiving the grand laugh as he walked through the audience that now thoroughly understood the case.

"By golly, talk 'bout yer mules kickin', why, dat eel would kick a yaller mule all ter pieces," said he.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE racket which Ebenezer kicked up at the Aquarium was not only a costly one, but he received the grand laugh from all present when it became known.

But there was no laugh in it for Ebenezer, not any. Being kicked by a mule would have been fun compared with receiving a shock from an electric eel, such as he had received, for had a mule caressed him with lively and lifty hind legs, he would have had some idea of what hurt him; but in this case he had no conception of what had knocked him endwise so suddenly.

On his arrival home the professor undertook to explain the matter to him.

"It serves you right, Ebenezer, for I have always observed that you have a bad habit of meddling with things you have no business to touch," said he.

"Yes, Ebenezer, that is very true, and now you see another illustration of the consequences," said Mrs. Plunket.

"You remember getting hold of my battery once and getting nearly killed," continued the old professor.

"By golly, sah, dat war jus' like it; jus' de very same," said Eben, suddenly recollecting the similarity of the two shocks he had received on account of his meddling propensities.

"Yes, they are very similar in effect."

"But how dat—you hab one of dem eels in your machine?"

"Not at all. In the case of my apparatus, the shock you received was produced by chemical and mechanical combinations, while in this case, it was simply a powerful discharge of animal electricity that these peculiar fish have the power of generating."

"By golly! I shouldn't car' 'bout catchin' dem kind of eels," said he.

"Well, you see what you get by meddling with what you don't understand," said Mrs. Plunket.

"But Dicky he say dat dey war singin' eels, an' dat if I cotch hold ob one ob dare tails dat I would heah 'em sing."

"And you did, didn't you?" she asked, laughing.

Ebenezer looked sick and foolish. He rubbed his arms, as though they still ached from the "song" he had heard sung.

"I wonder how much older you will have to be before you become fully aware of the fact that Richard is full of his practical jokes, and that whenever he asks you to do anything that you may be almost certain that a trick of some kind is at the bottom of it."

"I dun know, missus," said he, smiling sadly.

"Well, I have told you about it often enough, but it does seem as though you will not learn, either from experience or from advice."

"I's mighty 'fraid dat I shall hab fo' ter learn dat boy a lesson," said he.

"You had better learn your own first. Don't you have anything to do with him, for you see that he always gets the best of it and makes a fool of you. Now, mind what I tell you, and have nothing to do with him," said she, leaving the room.

Eben watched her departure in a dazed sort of a way, and then turned to the professor.

That great man stood as though struggling with some tremendous thought. With both hands he was holding his galloping brain, while his eyes were rolling as though in a frenzy.

"By golly, de ole man hab got 'em!" said he, in a whisper to himself. "What am de matter, boss?" he asked, approaching him.

"Hush! I have it! Quick! I'll revolutionize the world!" said he, rushing away to his study.

"Dat ole ham, he allus gwine fo' ter stonish somebody. Wonder what am de matter now?" and he followed to the professor's room.

"Eureka—eureka!" he exclaimed, just as Eben reached him.

"Whar hab yer got 'em wust, boss? Shall I go fo' de doctor?" asked Eben, really thinking that the old fellow had got something pretty bad.

"Go to the devil!"

"Can he cure de reka?"

"Oh, you black blessing in disguise! Ha-ha-ha!" exclaimed the old man, seizing Eben suddenly by the hand.

"Oh, he hab got 'em fo' shuah!" thought he, at the same time trying to get away from him.

"How little you knew what you did, you big black blunderer!" and again he laughed wildly.

"By golly, you bet I know how it feel!"

"How little you dreamed of what great things should follow your meddling!"

"What dat you say? Will it kill me, boss?" he asked, with sudden alarm.

"Fool, you have given me an idea that shall electrify the world!"

"Wid eels?"

"Yes—yes—yes; ha-ha-ha!" he laughed.

"What's the matter, unc?" asked Dick, who was attracted by the old man's loud laughing.

"Richard, give me your hand," said he, extending his own.

"Look out fo' him, Dicky. I am suah dat he hab got de james jams de wuss way," whispered Eben.

"What is it?" asked Dick, shaking hands with his eccentric uncle, and looking him in the face.

"Eureka!"

"Where did you reka it?"

"At the Aquarium."

"Look out, Dicky, he hab eels an' snakes in he boots fo' shuah," whispered Ebenezer, who really believed there was something wrong with the old man.

"Ah, you young mischief, you do not know what a discovery you brought about when you got Ebenezer to handle that electric eel," said he.

"I guess it was Sneezzer who made the discovery."

"Have your joke, Richard, have your joke; but in this instance it has given me an idea that will startle the world."

"Big as the cat trap?"

"You are a sad wag, Richard; but I forgive you, for suggesting this great idea."

"What is it?"

"Hush! Close the door. I'll build a tremendous electric magnetic engine; a hundred horse power. Each one of those electric eels has the power of a horse in him!"

"Hoss! Got mo' kick in 'em den a muel," said Ebenezer, interrupting him.

"I'll get a hundred of those eels and make a compound battery of them to run my engine. Do you see the idea, Richard?"

"Great!" said Dick, with enthusiasm.

"Nature's battery."

"An eel engine."

"Perpetual power at no cost."

"Only eel meat; say a stray cat to throw into your eel-pot once in a while."

"And all the while they will furnish their unseen power to run the engine."

"Great brain!"

"It will astonish the world."

"As much as the eel astonished Sneezzer."

"I'll send for half a dozen of those wonderful eels and commence my experiments at once. Go now and leave me alone, but don't mention this to any living mortal. You being my nephew will, of course, share the honors with me to a certain extent—"

"Same's I did with the cat-trap, eh?"

"Don't bother me—don't distract my mind, but leave me at once. Go—go!"

"All right, unc," and laughing, he allowed the wild old scientist to push both him and Ebenezer from the room.

"Dicky, de ole man hab got 'em bad," said Eben, after they were out of the room.

"Gues he has. But I don't think you'll fool around his eel-pot much, will you?"

"Guess not, honey. Dat war wuss nor de kick ob a cannon. But what fo' you lie ter me?"

"Who lied to you?"

"Didn't you say dat if I touch dat eel's tail dat he would sing?"

"Well, so he did. He struck a whole note and it tumbled over."

"Whole moak, I guess."

"Yes, that's it. The fact is, you got frightened and raised the devil before the eel got to work."

"I didn't like de way dat he struck dat fuss note, Dicky. But no foolin' now, I hab jus' tole your nudder dat I arn't gwine ter stan' any mo' ob you foolin', an' she say fo' me ter broke your back de nex' time dat you play any joke on me."

"That's all right, Sneezzer, I'm going to stop it now and give you a rest," said Dick, soberly.

"Dat am de mos' healthy thing that you can do, Dicky, fo' my mad am clar up to de bilin' point I ken tole yer," said he, shaking his head.

"I weaken, Sneezzer. Shake hands on it."

"Dar am my fist, Dicky. If yer stop right now I won't harm yer, but look out fo' de nex' time, look out!"

"All right, Shakel. Now we are friends again."

"Dat's so."

"And I'm going to do you a good turn by-and-by to pay for all the rackets I have worked on you."

"Dat's good 'nough, Dicky."

"Hush! I'm going to fix it all right between you and the cook," said he, with a knowing wink.

"How dat, Dicky?"

"Mum, now Mammy is going to Europe next spring and close the house for a year; Rose and I go with her, and of course that leaves you and the cook out in the cold."

"Oh, Dicky, am dat so?" he asked, sadly.

"Yes, and when she finds it out she will be glad to marry you."

"Do you flink so, Dicky?"

"Oh, I'm sure of it. I'll tell mammy to speak to her about it and tell her that it's the best thing she can do, and that if she will she'll take you both back when we return. See?"

"But, Dicky, dat makes me kinder sober," said he, as in truth it did, for he had never dreamed of being left out in the cold under any circumstances.

"What makes you sober—the idea of getting married to Miss Brown?"

"No, Dicky, but losin' my place."

"Oh, you can find another one for a year, and during the time you can get married, keep mum about it and I'll fix things all lovely."

Dick left him to think over this yarn, and for the next four days he was the bluest black man that was ever seen. Gradually, however, he made up his mind that if he could only get Miss Assafidity Brown for a wife that it would partially compensate him for losing his situation.

As for Dick, he was determined to play at least one more joke on him on the cook's account to pay him for his threats, and so he told her to encourage him a little and then make him jealous. In fact, they both enjoyed playing tricks on Eben, and lost no opportunity for doing so on all possible occasions.

In the meantime the old professor was working away at his wonderful eel-power engine, and he managed to secure half a dozen electric eels, after which he began his experiments.

Several times he received shocks from the eels which nearly killed him, but he said nothing about it for fear somebody might find out regarding the wonderful thing he was constructing.

But one afternoon while he was away, Johanna Gilhooly, one of the servants, happened to be in his study and saw the eels.

Being very fond of eels, she made up her mind to steal one of them and cook it for her own private tooth, thinking that the professor would never miss it, and so she asked the cook what she thought about it. Miss Brown agreed that they might have a nice meal on the quiet.

"Faith, he'll never miss it, an' they're as fat as ever they can be," she said.

"All right, you go up stairs an' cotch one ob 'em an' I cook him so nice dat it make your hair curl," said Miss Brown.

Miss Gilhooly took a basket and started up stairs for the purpose of capturing one of the professor's eels, but the first attempt she made she received a shock quite as powerful as the one that Eben received.

In fact, it knocked her down, and for a moment paralyzed all but her tongue, and with that she raised everybody within hearing, and they all rushed to the room to see what the matter was.

She lay on the floor yelling and groaning, but she soon recovered the use of her limbs.

"Sure, somebody kut me wid something," said she, in answer to Ebenezer's question.

"Who dat?"

"Troth, I—I don't know, but I war a-playin' wid the eels in there, an' when I put me hand in the wather, somebody kicked me, so they did."

Ebenezer remembered his own experience, and laughed heartily.

"Put the devil are ye laughing about?" she asked, indignantly.

"Why, dem's 'lectric eels," said he.

"Put's them?"

"Kind ob eels dat knock yer down widout touchin' yer."

"Put's that yer givin' me?"

"Fact. Try it again. Put your hand in de tank an' see how it feel."

"Do ye take me for a greenhorn? Sure, I guess I know put an eel is," said she, savagely.

"All right; try ter put your fingers in de water."

"Do yer think I'm afraid?" saying which she again put her hand into the glass tank.

But as before she received a powerful shock, and it tickled Ebenezer so that he laughed heartily, and this made her so mad that she turned upon him like a tigress, and believing also that he had something to do with the mysterious shock, she got square by giving him a good pounding, and nearly tearing the wool all out of his head.

He yelled and protested, but all in vain, and it was not until Mrs. Plunket had demanded silence and peace that she ceased whacking him and went to the kitchen.

But she never attempted to capture one of the professor's eels after that. She concluded that she had been mistaken, and that she didn't like eels, and Ebenezer Crow concluded that he didn't like her.

Everybody enjoyed a good laugh at Miss Gilhooly's expense, and even Eben did so when she was not around. But he could not help thinking what an unfortunate fellow he was, for nothing seemed to happen that he did not get the worst of it.

A week or so after the affair it was all forgotten, and things again moved on in their accustomed manner.

Ebenezer in the meantime had told the cook what their prospects were in connection with their mistress breaking up housekeeping for a year, and had soberly suggested that they get married, and be all ready to resume their positions again when Mrs. Plunket returned.

This she seemed to encourage for a while, but finally she began to act the coquette again, which led him to half suspect that he had a rival. He consulted Dick.

"Well, Sneezer, I don't know," said Dick; "you know that good-looking colored fellow who has called on her once or twice?"

"Yes. She calls him her cousin."

"Ah! between you and I, I am afraid that he is trying to cut you out. By the way, she told me that this same cousin was going to call on her this very evening."

"By golly! I bust his jaw!"

"Hold on. Don't be rash. Hide yourself somewhere in the kitchen and hear what they say. If he makes love to her—why, that settles it."

"I do dat, Dicky. I do dat, fo'shuah. But whar I hide?"

"Isn't there any place in the kitchen?"

"But she might find me."

"Oh, I'll tell you where you can hide, if you only manage to do so when she isn't there."

"Whar dat?" he asked, anxiously.

"In the flour bin. It is empty now."

"Am dat so?"

"Yes, and there couldn't be a nicer place. You can hear every word that is said, and she will never think of looking in there."

"An' he's gwine fo' ter come heah ter-night?"

"So she says."

"By golly, I jus' fin' out 'bout dat."

"I would if I were you."

"If she make lub ter dat chap I bust his jaw, fo'shuah," said he, with a clenched fist as big as a sheep's head.

"So I would. If he is a rival, you want to get away with him same as you did with Mr. Ham."

"Don't you fo'get it, Dicky."

"I'll tell you how to work it. I'll send Gilhooly away somewhere, and you go down into the kitchen and chin your girl a little while, and I will call her up stairs for something, leaving the coast clear for you to jump into the empty flour bin."

"All right, Dicky, I go. But won't yer mudder want me fo' ter wait on de table?"

"No; I'll fix that. I'll say that I sent you away on an errand for me, and let Gilhooly wait on the table to-night."

"All right, Dicky; you am a great contriver."

"Well, you see, I want to help you, and the first thing to do is to find out whether she loves another or not."

"Dat am a fac'."

"So you go down stairs now, and I'll make it so that you can find out all about it."

Ebenezer did as requested, and in a very short time Dick had carried out his part of the programme.

He called the cook up stairs, leaving him alone in the kitchen, and without a moment's loss the jealous darkey lifted the cover of the long flour box, which was empty, and got down into it the best he could, and allowed the cover to fall back into its place again.

"Now we have him!" said Dick to the cook, who laughed heartily.

"Hush! don't let him hear you, or he'll tumble. What time will the grocer be here?"

"Bout six o'clock, I guess," said she.

"Well, it's only three now, and he will undoubtedly be asleep by the time he comes. You know the racket

—keep singing about your work just as though you never suspected that he was there."

"All right, Dicky, I fix him."

"But you really ought to marry him after all this fun you have had with him."

"Go 'way wid your foolin', Dicky!" said she, giving him a push and going back into the kitchen.

Dick laughed and went out to meet some of his pals, who were always anxious to hear what racket he had played on Ebenezer Crow.

And poor Ebenezer! He had once more put his foot in it, or rather his whole body, but as usual he never thought about it until it was too late, and when he did understand what a black donkey he had made of himself, he was at loss whether to blame Dick or himself for it.

In his anxiety to find out whether he had a rival or not, he never stopped to think about what time of day it was.

The idea was a good one and the probabilities were that he would not be detected, but now that he was boxed up where he couldn't get out without giving himself away badly, he understood that it was only about three o'clock in the afternoon, and that his rival would not be likely to visit there before seven or half past.

And there he was, curled up uncomfortably in that flour bin, where he must stay for four or five hours before he could hear a thing that he wanted to hear.

Meantime Miss Brown went about her work singing merrily as usual, and Ebenezer listened a long time to the melody of her voice, and inwardly vowed that he would pulverize any fellow who should dare to make love to her.

But finally he began to feel sleepy, and the knowledge that it would be a long time before his supposed rival would be there induced him to take a nap, fully believing that he would wake up before he arrived, notwithstanding he was a very sound sleeper.

So he gave way to his inclination and was soon sound asleep and snoring.

The mischievous cook was in ecstasies, and could not keep the secret from Miss Gilhooly, her fellow-servant, and to show how sound asleep he was, she opened the lid of the bin, and they both had a good laugh at the comical figure therein.

"Begorra, but he's the biggest fool on two legs, so he is," said the Irish girl.

"Dat am so, but jealousy am a green-eyed lobster, so Shakespeare says."

"A green-eyed jackass more loike."

Presently Dick came in to see that everything was working all right, and not long afterwards the grocer's wagon drove up with a barrel of flour.

This was taken to the kitchen as usual, and the two men accompanying it proceeded to open and empty it into the bin.

The cook purposely kept the light as low as possible, and when they were all ready to empty the flour into the bin, she told them to lift it up and she would raise the cover.

The men were in a hurry, and it being cold, they paid little attention to what they were doing, and the first thing Ebenezer Crow knew he was smothered under about half a barrel of flour.

He awoke, and leaped out of that bin with a yell that frightened the two men, who hastily set down the barrel, and started to run.

"Oh! ah! whew! pah! bah!" he cried; and he was the most comical whitewashed darkey ever seen.

"What the devil is that?" asked one of the men.

"What you do in dat flour box, you Ebenezer Crow?" demanded the cook.

"Who dat—who dar?" he replied, puffing the flour out of his mouth, and trying to rub it out of his eyes, while the others roared with laughter.

"What you do dar, you fool nigger?"

"Who frow dat?"

By this time Dick had managed to get his mother and sister into the kitchen, and then there was such another tableau as was never seen in that house before.

But amid all the laughter, excitement and confusion, Ebenezer had nothing to say. He was sick.

CHAPTER XX.

"EBENEZER CROW, how came you in the flour bin?" demanded Mrs. Plunket, sternly.

Ebenezer stood there, looking like a white-washed fool, and had nothing to say.

He looked at Dick imploringly, as much as to ask him to help him out of his trouble, but that young mischief who had put up the job, only laughed and called him the "flour" of the family.

"Answer me!" again demanded his mistress.

"Fo' de Lord, missus, I don't know."

"A likely story that you don't know how you came in that flour bin."

"I—I somehow don't know; I—"

"Big fool nigger; spoil all dat flour," said the cook, with a big show of indignation.

"Tell me, sir, what is the meaning of it?"

"Fo' de Lor', Missus Plunket, I spect dat I war a-walkin' in my sleep."

A roar of laughter greeted this thin explanation.

"I catch de somnambulism when I was a boy."

"What ridiculous nonsense. Bring another barrel of flour; he shall pay for this," said Mrs. Plunket, turning to the grocer's men, who, although startled at first, had been enjoying the whole affair.

"Yes, ma'am," and they withdrew, leaving the party a family one.

Ebenezer was the sickest-looking coon that was ever seen, and as he stood there gazing from one to the other, he wished that the floor would open, and let him down through out of sight.

And to make matters still more aggravating, Dick

was holding his sides to keep from bursting with laughter.

"Drefful funny, amn't it?" he said, aside to Dick, for he suspected he had put up the job on him, although he did not dare to say so on account of the nature of the affair. But he little suspected that the servants knew all about it, and what a big calf he had made of himself.

"Funny! I should say so," replied Dick.

"I believe dat you put up de job, Dicky."

"Me! How the deuce could I put it up? How did I know that they were going to bring flour?"

"Ebenezer, there is something strange about this, and unless you explain it in a rational way, I shall deduct the price of that flour from your wages," said Mrs. Plunket, going from the kitchen, followed by her daughter Rose, who was laughing quite as heartily over the affair, and enjoying it quite as much as Dick.

"Oh, my Moses! I draver pay fo' ten ba'ls ob flour dan hab dis yer happen," said he.

"It is rather rough on you, old man," said Dick.

"Dicky, I wants ter argy wid yer a few minutes alone somewhar."

"What yer in dar 'sleep for, eh?" demanded the cook, again going for him.

"Miss Brown, dar am some tings in dis yer mon-dane zistence dat am so sacredness in de intensity ob dar secretness, dat it becomes rudeness on de part ob any outsider to ax 'bout 'em," said he, looking at her as solemnly as a boiled owl.

Another roar of laughter greeted this.

"What secretness 'bout getting inter dat flour box, an' goin' 'sleep? Answer me dat."

"I disdain fo' ter hol' communication wid yer on de subject", Miss Brown."

"Now, look heah, Ebenezer Crow, I bet dat you got in dar fo' ter spy on me, and fell asleep."

"Av course he did," put in Miss Gilhooly.

Ebenezer rolled the whites of his eyes towards Dick.

"Is that so, Sneezer? Was you trying to pipe her off, you big fat rascal?" said Dick, punching him in the ribs.

Crow was speechless with amazement.

"Big jealous calf, you! What yer snoopin' 'round me fo'? What yer 'spose I care for you, anyway?"

"Miss Brown, you do me wrong," said he, at length.

"Well, I'll do you 'Brown,' if yer don't keep 'way from me wid yer foolin'. Big overgrown calf, some hidin' 'round de kitchen tryin' fo' ter heah what amn't none ob yer business," said she.

"Who says dat I hide in dar?"

"I say so."

"And dar am whar you make a great mistake."

"How you come dar, den? Crawl in dere ter get rid ob yer work?"

"Miss Assafidity Brown, I shall preserve de sacredness ob my secret," said he, going to the sink to wash the flour from his head and face.

"Bet you don't dare took you oaf dat I amn't right 'bout it," said she.

"Iscorns de alligation an' de alligator."

"Oh, go cook yerself! But if I catch yer 'round heah when my company comes dis ebenin', I sick him on ter yer, an' don't you whistle dat I won't, an' he knock de beeswax all out ob yer in 'bout two minutes by de clock."

This was wormwood to the poor jealous lover, for it was this very "company" that had induced him to hide in the flour-box at Dick's suggestion.

"How about that, old man? Are you going to stand any nonsense of that sort?" asked Dick.

"Dicky, you will please mind you own business, an' I do de same," said he, turning savagely upon his youthful tormentor.

"All right, and the next time you want me to help you to find out about the cook just let me know, that's all," and pretending to be angry he left the kitchen.

But his parting speech was a give away of the whole thing, and the servants laughed at him.

He knew that it was a give away, and this confirmed him in the belief that Dick had only pretended to assist him just to get a chance to play another joke on him.

He made no reply to their chaffing for some time, but kept at work cleaning himself.

"You a healthy duck, arn't yer?"

"Faith, but ye acted the part of a white man any way," said the Irish girl.

"I don't care ter heah any ob you' remarks on de subject", Miss Gilhooly," said he, indignantly.

"Begorra, but I'll make as many as I loike, un' fut'll yees do about it, ye ould pig?" said she, saucily.

"Lucky dat I amn't an Irish pig."

"Faith, ye'd have a drop of dacincy in ye if ye war Irish, an' if ye give me any ob yer black lip I'll give yees a welt in the gob, so I will," said she, approaching him with clenched fists.

Her Irish was up, and he concluded that the best thing he could do was to get out, and he did.

He went in search of Dick, but that young mar had stepped out.

Well, Ebenezer didn't hear the last of that racket for a long time, and even Mrs. Plunket and other members of the family would rally him about it.

It was rather a bitter dose to swallow, but he got away with it as gracefully as he could, and at the same time lost no opportunity of making love to the cook, and she lost none of playing jokes on him.

But both she and Dick gave him quite a long rest so far as any serious jokes were concerned, yet they were all the while trying to study up some new joke for him.

Finally Dick saw something at one of the variety theaters that gave him an idea, although it cost him quite a sum of money to carry it out. But money

was nothing to him if he could manage to have the worth of it in fun.

In this, as in most of the rackets, the cook was his side partner. But in this one she had to work the whole thing herself after he had got things all to rights.

And when everything was ready he went for Ebenezer in this way.

"I say, Sneezer, did you hear the row down stairs last night?" he asked.

"No. What dat?"

"Some hard words between mammy and the cook about her having that fellow visiting her."

"No; am dat so, Dicky?" he asked, quickly, while his whole mug lighted up with a smile.

"Yes; I think she told her some time ago not to allow him to visit her, but you know she has done so quite often."

"Yes, by golly, dat am so, an' two free time I good mine fo' ter mash he jaw."

"Well, as near as I can find out she had him there last night, and mammy tumbled to it and got mad. But when she got down to the kitchen the coon had escaped somewhere, and she swore he hadn't been in the house at all. That's made the row."

"By golly, dat am good. What business he got comin' foolin' round dis yer family, anyway?"

"Not the slightest. But don't you drop to it?"

"Drop ter what, chile?"

"The racket."

"No. How dat?"

"Why, don't you see that mammy is working for you? You see she wants you and the cook to get married, and don't want any other coon fooling around; don't you see?"

"By golly, Dick, dat mudder ob yours am a noble woman," said he, earnestly.

"Of course she is. But lay low and work your points quietly."

With this for a beginning to the racket, Dick left him to be taken up next by the pretty cook.

That evening after dinner they met. She was looking very sad, for she had a part to act.

"What seems to be de matter wid de lubly Miss Brown dis ebenin'?" said he.

She glanced nervously around.

"Hush!" she said, at length, in a tragic whisper.

Ebenezer whirled around excitedly, just as though he expected to find his rival behind him with a club or pistol.

"What am it, honey?"

"Hush!"

Again he glanced nervously around, and his eyes stuck out like door-knobs.

Dick was where he could see and hear without being seen or heard himself.

"Honey, am dar anything wrong?"

"Yes," and with the air and action of a tragic queen, she went to the entry door and listened.

"Spoke ter me, honey; what am de matter?"

"Ebenezer Crow, do you lub me?" she asked, seizing him suddenly by the arm.

"Do I lub yer? Do a kitten lub a warm brick? Do a humblebee lub clover?" he asked, with a grin.

"Will you swear it?"

"Golly, yes, on a stack of Bibles as high as dis house. Wherefore do you ask, lubly one?"

"Because I am about to put it to a big test," said she, glancing wildly around the room.

"Guess she am gwyne fo' ter marry me," thought he.

"Swear dat you will not betray me!"

"Good gracious! what am de matter, sweetness? What makes you look and talk so queer?"

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes, I do, a dozen times."

"Once will do. Now listen. I am in trouble, an' if you will help me out ob it, I will marry you."

"Oh—oh—oh! jus' name it!" said he, catching her by the hand with great excitement.

"Listen! You know de young fellow who has been here to see me a few times?"

"Dat lub ob yours?—yes."

"He war no lub ob mine. I didn't like him fo' a cent, but I had him come heah fo' to plague you."

"Am dat so, sweetness?"

"Ob course it is. Now listen. Mrs. Plunket, she tole me not to hab him come heah, an' he knew dat she didn't want him. So when he heah her comin' down the stairs las' night he ran one way an' I ran another. When I came back, when she call me, I couldn't see him nowhere, an' thought dat he 'scaped over de back-yard fence, an' so I tole Mrs. Plunket dat he wasn't heah, an' hadn't been. All right. Now here is where de tragedy comes in; and she seized his arm, causing him to jump and look around nervously."

"Oh, Lord! what am it?" he asked, trembling.

"He got into de big brick oven there, an' de big

fool, I s'pose he went ter sleep. Well, dis mornin' I built a fire under de oven an' bake him dead!"

"What, bake him dead?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Yes; only think ob it!"

"Mighty Moses!"

"Now, you see it was all an accident, but for fear ob de scandal an' trouble, I wants you fo' ter take him in a big sack an' carry him down to de dock an' frow him in."

"Oh, Lord!" and he trembled like a leaf.

"Have you de courage?"

"Oh, Lord! oh, honey, I—"

"Ah, you haven't de courage; you do not lub me. All right. Dat settles it," said she, reproachfully.

"Honey—honey, I—I—"

"Will you do as I ask you or not?"

"Honey, I—I—yes, I do it."

"All right, den I'll marry you. Here is a sack that I have got for the job. Put him into it, take it on your back an' carry it down to de dock."

"All right, I go right away."

"And heah is a drink ob whiskey fo' ter brace you up," said she, producing it.

"Oh, sweetness, your sweet self am enough ter brace me good enough. But I take de whiskey fo' ter keep out de cold," and he took it.

"All right, I'll go up stairs now, and when you think de coast am clear, go ahead."

"All right, honey. Gib me one kiss."

"Jus' one now, but lots when you come back."

She gave him a kiss, and it seemed to take every kink out of his wool; and this, together with the whiskey, braced him to almost any undertaking.

She went from the room and he took up the big sack and went to the oven.

"By golly, dat nigger am done brown fo' shuah," he chuckled.

Now here I will explain matters a little.

Dick had provided two "dummies," representing black men shrivelled up badly, and one of them was in the oven waiting for Ebenezer. He held the sack up to the oven and pulled the dummy into it.

"Guess you won't come foolin' around my gal any mo'," he chuckled, as he crammed the supposed "stiff" down into the bag. "Golly, he ain't very heavy," he added, lifting it upon his shoulder. "Guess she bake de gravy all out ob him."

He went to the basement door, and after making sure that no one was looking, he stole out and started towards the East river. The bundle was a big one, but he trudged along with it, happy over the reward that he was to receive.

After a walk of about half an hour, he succeeded in throwing the "body" into the river. The night was dark and cold, and so there happened to be nobody who took notice enough of him to see what he was doing.

In the meantime Dick and the others were laughing and having a splendid time over the racket, and wondering whether Eben would get arrested or not, or whether he would succeed in reaching the river.

But after enjoying the fun for half an hour, Dick put the other "dummy" in the oven and waited for Eben's return.

In the course of an hour he came, and Miss Brown met him at the basement door.

"It am all right, honey," said he, at the same time attempting to embrace her.

"What am de matter wid you? Whar you been all dis time?" she asked, as she kept him at bay.

"Why, I jus' come back from de riber; I chuck him in, sweetness—I chuck him in."

"Ebenezer, you are drunk, an' dis will spoil eberything. Didn't you promise to remove dat body from de oven?"

"Why, honey, so I did, I chuck him in de riber."

"What nonsense. Dere is de body in the oven an' de sack dat I gave yer. Whar yer been eber since? Guess yer off yer nut."

"What am dat you say?" said he, with wide open eyes.

"Go an' see for yerself."

Ebenezer started for the oven, where, sure enough, he found the body.

"Wha'—wha'!" he gasped.

"De whiskey got de best ob yer."

"By golly, what am de meaning ob dis? I took my solemn davy dat I took dat baked nigger in a bag an' lug him down to de riber."

"Nonsense. De whiskey made yer think so."

"I tole yer, honey, dat I know it."

"No, yer dream yer did. Dat's all. Now, go ahead, quick."

"By golly, dat yer beats all dat I eber hear tell ob. Guess dat I's off my nut shuah nough. But I fotch him dis time fo' shuah," and going to the oven with the sack precisely as he had done before, he loaded

the "stiff" into it and started once more for the river.

But it was a mystery to him all the while just the same, for if he had been over that ground at all, he was now going over it for the second time.

He was trudging along under the heavy load, all the while wondering whether he was dreaming or not, and just before reaching the dock, a policeman grabbed him, and he dropped the bundle upon the sidewalk.

"What have you got here?"

"Nuffin'," said Eben, as soon as he could recover from his surprise.

"All right, I'll take you in, and we'll see what your 'nothing' looks like."

"Oh, Lord! I shall be hung now fo' shuah," he thought, as he picked up the bundle again and started for the station house in company with the officer.

On arriving there, the officers began to investigate the contents of the sack, when the black dummy was dumped out upon the floor. It was so bad that a person with half an eye could have seen the cheat.

"What the deuce do you call that?" asked the sergeant.

Ebenezer was as much puzzled as anybody, but he was not long in getting through his head that he had once more been a victim to Dick Plunket.

He tried to explain it to the officers, but they wouldn't have it, and after taking his name and address, they locked him up for the night in spite of all his protestations.

An officer was at once dispatched to the residence of Mrs. Plunket to make inquiries, and the result was that his story was fully confirmed. So he was not held, but as a penalty for being such a fool, he was made to carry the dummy back home again the next morning, where he was received with shouts of laughter.

Whether to lay it to Dick or the cook, or to both, he could not make up his mind, but whoever it was, their gore would surely be spilled.

No such indignity as that could be heaped upon him without some blood.

Dick attempted to quiz him about it, and he made a rush for him and he lit out, while his dog "lit" on Ebenezer's shin and sampled it for some time before he could be shaken off.

"What's de matter wid you, Ebenezer?" asked the cook, seriously.

"What kind ob a shabby joke war dat you played on me, tell me dat?" he demanded, savagely.

"What you call shabby?"

"Dat trick dat you played on me."

"Den it am shabby fo' ter make yer prove yer lub, am it?"

"How's dat?"

"You say dat you lub me an' I wanted ter prove it. You hab been weighed in de balance an' found hunky."

"Am dat what's de matter, sweetness?" he asked, while a grin gradually stole over his face in place of the savage frown it wore until then.

"Ob course it am."

"Oh, golly! Whew!" and he seized her around the waist and began to dance with her.

Just then Dick ventured back.

"Halloo!"

"Oh, it am all right, Dicky! You hab your fun but I win de game."

"Have you got her sure?"

"She am mine, chile."

"Good boy! I congratulate you. Now by the time we get back from Europe you can have everything all fixed, and be ready to resume your places again."

"Dat am all right, Dicky."

And so it was. After all the tribulations he had experienced at her hands, he had captured her at last.

In a month from that time Mrs. Plunkett and family were ready to sail for Europe, where they proposed to remain about a year, and close up the house. But Dick could not bear to go away without seeing Eben and Miss Assafidity Brown married.

Accordingly they were married in church, and allowed to receive their friends at Mrs. Plunket's house.

It was a high old reception, for Dick had his own friends there, and played several tricks on the newly-married couple before the festivities were concluded.

A grand "walk around" wound up the affair, and so the whole thing ended elegantly, and the next day, after seeing the Plunkets off for Europe, they started for their "Crow's nest," which Ebenezer had provided before hand.

All's well that ends well, and here, reader, we will take leave of our old friend, EBENEZER CROW.